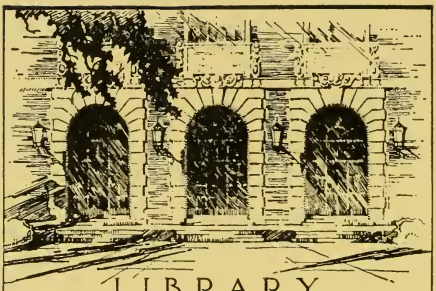

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WOOED AND MARRIED.

A Novel.

BY

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AUTHOR OF
"NELLIE'S MEMORIES," "WEE WIFIE," "BARBARA HEATHCOTE'S TRIAL,"
AND "ROBERT ORD'S ATONEMENT."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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WOOED AND MARRIED.

CHAPTER I.

HONOR'S INTERCESSION.

WOODSIDE, as Mr. Grey's house was called, lay in a little hollow scooped out of the main road, and forming a sort of dingle, beside which flowed the trout-stream; the garden ascended at the back, and led by a gate into a small pine-wood, which looked deliciously shady by day, but somewhat sombre by night, the house being perfectly lonely, with the exception of two cottages lower down the road.

Dym thought the steep garden beautiful, and longed to explore it; but on nearer view it was somewhat wild and uncultivated, weeds grew in the garden-paths, and roses and lilies bloomed amid cabbages and tall straggling heads of asparagus; the ivy that covered the house was graceful in its negligence, but sadly required cropping and training; and two boys and a girl, looking equally uncared for, were playing at horses before the gate. They rushed up to Honor at once, and

the leader—a pretty little dark-eyed thing—exclaimed:

"Oh, I am so glad you've come, Miss Nethecote! Now mamma wont cry any more to-day."

"If mamma is ill, you should not have left her, Amy," returned Honor reprovingly. And the child hung her head.

"Mother said we might go out and play, as she wasn't well enough to hear us our lessons," shouted the driver—a sturdy bright-faced boy of nine.

"Never mind, Rupert, you shall do your Latin with me," observed Miss Nethecote consolingly. And as the young student looked anything but gratified, she added: "I have some fine pears for some good children, but they must be fairly earned first."

"Oh, I'll come in and do my sums!" called out Edgar, the second boy.

"Mayn't I hem my duster?" pleaded Amy.

Honor smiled, and then bade them all come in quietly by-and-bye. She only wanted to introduce a new friend to their mother, and then she would attend to them.

The outside of the house had prepared Dym for the total want of comfort and even cleanliness in the inside; but, as Miss Nethecote observed in a low voice—

"How was a woman with bad health, and six children, and only one servant, to keep a place tidy and comfortable?"

Dym thought she would have managed better when she saw the living-room of the family. The

muslin curtains were torn and soiled; the table-cover spotted with ink; lesson-books strewn hither and thither; a Noah's ark was on the floor; and a sickly-looking child lay fast asleep with a box of tin soldiers beside her, and a headless doll hugged tightly in her arms. Honor picked her up, by way of beginning, and nearly crushed a farmyard and half a dozen ducks and geese; two or three trees crackled crisply under her feet.

Mrs. Grey lay on a couch at the end of the room, with a piled-up basket of mending beside her. A great boy of three was fretfully trying to clamber up in her lap, and a beautiful infant lay fast asleep in an old-fashioned cradle with rockers. Honor deposited the sleeping child carefully on the couch at the mother's feet; and lifting the boy into her arms, and rocking the cradle at the same time, quietly introduced Dym.

"Now, Esther, you must cheer up; for I have brought Miss Elliott to talk to you."

"You have brought her into a sad untidy place, I am afraid; but I am very glad to see you, Miss Elliott, all the same. A new face is rather a treat in these parts: I never see any one but Honor—never."

"Except Mrs. Chichester and Mrs. Fortescue now and then, you mean. And you forget how kind Mrs. Trevor was last summer."

"Yes; but she has not been for a long time. I was only saying so to Edward this morning; but, as I told him, what inducement can any

one have to come to such a place? Please sit down, Miss Elliott. I am afraid the children have littered all the chairs."

"She shall have mine, for I want to clear up the room; and then I have promised to take Rupert to his lessons. Miss Elliott, I believe you are fond of children: will you take poor Harry? he is not very well, and wants to be nursed." And before Dym could answer, she found herself rocking the cradle, with a sleepy boy on her lap who took up all her attention.

"I am afraid he will tire you, Miss Elliott," observed his mother.

Mrs. Grey had a soft monotonous voice, with a fretful chord in it, like Harry's. Was this the woman that Honor liked best in Birstwith—better even than Mrs. Chichester, and good-natured merry little Mrs. Trevor? Dym found herself wondering and watching her hostess between the intervals of rocking.

She was certainly an interesting-looking young woman. The shape of the face was almost as fine as Honor's, and she had large sad-looking brown eyes. Dym found out afterwards she had been a great beauty; but constant ill health had faded the fresh complexion, making her look sallow and older than her age. The pretty soft hair was thin, and brushed carelessly from the face, as though Esther Grey had ceased to care for her own good looks; and her dress was put on with the same negligence: the loose sleeves showed the white wasted arms pitiably, and Dym

had quite shrunk from the touch of the thin hot fingers.

One thing she noticed: Mrs. Grey was evidently a fond mother; for her eyes brightened when Dym praised Harry's curly hair, and commented on the beauty of the baby—another boy—and her voice lost a little of its dreary whine, as Rupert and Edgar came in with their hair nicely brushed, and took their places at the table with Honor, while little Amy gathered up the remnant of the toys, and then sat quietly to work on her duster.

"The children are all as good as gold when Honor is here," whispered Mrs. Grey. "And then she teaches them so beautifully. Rupert learns twice as fast with her as he does with me; and he is such a clever boy! I am afraid I haven't the right knack of teaching. He asks me questions, and that makes me nervous. I am a sad invalid, Miss Elliott."

Dym put a civil question or two, which soon brought out a whole list of ailments from the poor lady. Dym asked Miss Nethecote afterwards whether she really had all that matter with her, and was told very gravely in answer that she feared Mrs. Grey was very delicate. Dym grew to understand her interest in her after a time, when she knew both better.

Poor Esther Grey had married for love, very unwisely, as all her friends said; and, indeed, she little knew what was before her when she accepted the young doctor, Edward Grey. "And

she might have married any one," as one of them observed—a rich East India director, an uncle of Esther's, who had just died without leaving them a penny. But she was only eighteen; and Edward Grey was good-looking and very much in love; and everything went on as merrily as wedding-bells for the first two or three years. Esther was not a very good manager, but she looked wonderfully beautiful; and Mr. Grey was disposed to be lenient, and to think that she would do better as she grew older.

And doubtless this would have been the case if Esther had had a mother to advise her, or even had she known Honor sooner; but Mr. Grey had not yet begun to practise in Birstwith. The close street and the small house in the smoky suburb of Leeds began to oppress the young country beauty, the children came too fast, and the little household grew more pinched and straitened every day; Esther's fresh roses paled, her spirits declined, she grew wan and anxious, then fretful; naturally sweet-tempered and lymphatic, she soon ceased efforts that seemed unavailing, and before youth was past sank into a nervous invalid.

Most people pitied Mr. Grey, but in truth the fault lay on both sides. He was a clever, energetic man, indefatigable in his profession, and much loved by his patients; but as the years went on, transforming Esther from the petted wife into the harassed worn-out mother, he was a little hard on her, his comfortless home was distasteful to him, he grew weary of constant

complaints and ailments; at times when he came home jaded and weary, and needing those little nameless offices which wives generally delight to offer, he would speak almost roughly to her: "If you would make some effort things would not be so shamefully neglected," he said sometimes. And so they grew apart. Esther was too gentle to retaliate, but her tears were the constant source of annoyance to her husband; in time she ceased to tell him of her nervous fancies, she began to suffer in silence; she never told him now what was the truth, that such efforts were beyond her. With the consciousness of failing strength there came a new, strange tenderness into her heart for the husband of her youth. "He will learn to hate me and to hate his home," she said once to Honor in the first days of their friendship; "and he used to love it so. I believe he hardly cares to look at his children, because he thinks they are so neglected; he is working himself to death for us, and yet I never dare tell him so. Last night I could hardly sleep for watching him, he looked so grey and thin."

In those days Honor would preach patience and courage, she would bid Esther look her troubles boldly in the face, and rouse herself to do her daily work; but of late she had ceased wholly from such advice. Instead of that she would come almost daily and take tasks on herself, to spare Esther; the mending baskets would dwindle down almost by miracle, though Grace Dunster and Phil could tell another tale. Rupert

began to make progress with his lessons, and Amy at times was transformed into a neat-handed little maiden. Honor would brighten the whole household for a few hours, but of late there was always a lingering tenderness in her manner as she kissed Esther and wished her good-bye, and often as she left the house she would sigh to herself and say, "Poor girl, poor Esther!"

Love begets love: a real warm affection will often grow out of mere pity and liking; we cannot help another without a strong interest springing up in our hearts for the object we have succoured; the Samaritan, as he journeyed on, must often have thought of the man whose wounds he had just bound up with oil and wine.

Honor soon learnt to love the woman who was leaning all her weary weight on her; she bore with her as patiently as though she were her own sister; the gentleness that failed to stir the husband's latent love irresistibly attracted Honor: presently, in the long watches beside Esther's bed, she discerned the feeble excellences and beauties of her nature. "I never knew a purer or more loving heart," she once said to Dym; "and by-and-bye he will find it out; not that I blame him," she hastily added, with that sweet charity which was natural to her; "he has the hardest life a man can have, and Esther has never been to him the wife he needed."

Mr. Grey did not make his appearance that day till the luncheon was nearly over. He brightened up visibly when he saw Honor, and

shook hands cordially with Miss Elliott, and even addressed his wife cheerfully.

He was a fair, gentlemanly man, but, although still young, his hair was turning grey, and had worn perceptibly off the temples. There was an irritable look about the mouth, too, and the face was deeply lined. Dym liked him at once. "What a fine head he has, and what deep-set, thoughtful eyes!" she remarked to Honor afterwards.

"Yes, he is very clever; a most intellectual man, as Mrs. Chichester says; but as blind as a bat in some things. There are eyes that can only see Africa," she added, laughing, in well-known reference to the immortal Mrs. Jelleby.

Dym could not see this at first. She thought Mr. Grey's manner very amiable to his wife and children. He took his place at the table with a little joke at Rupert's expense, and praised Honor's arrangement of the fruit and flowers. She little knew this was a gala day with him, poor man, whenever Honor was present. "How very good you are to us, Miss Nethecote!" he said, in a low voice, when late in the afternoon he walked with them to their own gate.

"Am I?" she returned in her abrupt way. "Well, if you think so, I wonder if you will do me a favour in return?"

"A hundred, if you will," very warmly.

"Nay, one will do; you are a clever doctor, Mr. Grey, but you have sadly neglected one of your patients. Just go in now, and find out what is the matter with your wife."

They found Humphrey in his broad-brimmed hat, leaning against the garden gate, watching for them.

"I thought you were never coming. You'll be late, surely, Duchess."

Honor gave a bright dissenting smile.

"I do not think so, dear; I shall only detain you a few minutes. Will you and Miss Elliott walk on?"

"I have promised to dine with Trevor, so you can put me out of your reckoning," returned Mr. Nethecote rather more gruffly than usual.

Honor looked up in a little surprise.

"You did not tell me that before, Humphrey."

"Well, Duchess, what of that?"

"Only that I am sorry to go without you, dear;" putting her hand on his arm and looking at him wistfully.

"Can't help it," still more abruptly. "The Squire has not asked me, nor you either, I expect;" wrinkling his brows hideously.

"I am going by Mrs. Chichester's invitation," replied Honor calmly. "I am sorry you will not come with me, Humphrey."

"Better not," was the abrupt response. "When the Squire is in this mood we might have words. If he had asked me, well and good. I never refused him anything, and I wont begin now; but Madam may keep her invitations for me."

Was good-natured Humphrey Nethecote cross or hurt? Dym wondered. Honor left him quietly after this rebuff. Perhaps the secret of

her power over men—ay, and women too—was that she was so silent with them, speaking just to the purpose, and nothing more. "Women are too fond of trying to stop a leak with a word; I prefer deeds," she once said; and in very truth Honor was a woman of deeds.

She came down the garden a few minutes later, and beckoned to Dym. "We have no time to lose; good-night, Humphrey; give my love to Mrs. Trevor."

"We are both going the same way," replied her brother, rather sulkily, as he prepared to accompany them.

"Always the same way, though we do sometimes take different turnings;" assented Honor fondly, as she took his arm. Dym marvelled at the look that passed between the brother and sister; it made her think of Will with a sigh. Then she bethought herself how beautiful Honor looked; she wore a soft white dress of some clinging material, falling in close long folds, with a black lace shawl arranged as a mantilla.

"We shall meet nothing but cows till we get to Ingleside," she said, in answer to Dym's look of surprise.

But she was wrong; for in the last field they came upon the Squire.

He was sitting on the stile, evidently enjoying the sunset, with his gun resting against his knee, and Kelpie sitting erect on his haunches, with his tongue lolling out, and his eyes fixed eagerly on his master.

"There's a group for you," whispered

Humphrey. "What a fine-looking man the Squire is, to be sure!" Honor dropped her brother's arm, and went forward alone. Dym could see the start of surprise, and the sudden swarthy reddening of his brow as he saw her, and it struck her Honor looked just a little pale.

"Honor, is it you?" dropping his gun so hastily as he rose, that its muzzle almost touched Honor's knee.

"That was very careless of you, Mr. Chichester," she observed coolly, as he stooped in affright; "I shouldn't wonder if it were loaded, too."

Mr. Chichester's answer was to shoulder the gun, and discharge its contents into a distant hedge; after which he restored it to its proper position, but Dym noticed that his hand trembled, and there was a frown on his face as he addressed Honor.

"Yes, there might have been an accident, and you would have been the cause of it," he said, almost angrily; "the old caliph was right when he insisted women were at the bottom of all mischief."

"A civil greeting, and evidently intended for me, Mr. Chichester."

"Why did you come upon me so suddenly?" he demanded; then looking at her from head to foot, "it is not often we see you in the home field at this time in the evening, and in a white dress, too."

"I am coming up to Ingleside to spend the evening."

"If it be not too rude a question, did you ask yourself, Miss Nethecote?"

"No, Mr. Chichester." There was something arch in Honor's face as she answered him.

"What has brought you, then?" he repeated, still more irritably.

Honor put her hand in his with a dignified frankness that was quite irresistible.

"Will you help me over the stile, please? Your mother is waiting dinner, I know. I will explain as we walk on."

How Dym longed to hear that explanation! Probably Humphrey walked slowly to give Honor her opportunity, for he lingered provokingly now and then to admire the prospect; and drove Dym nearly wild with a long dissertation on the architecture of some new schools the Squire was building; he would persist in walking with her up the drive, though she told him twice Mr. Trevor's dinner gong had sounded, and he was even longer than usual in shaking hands.

"I shall be too late to dress for dinner, and Mrs. Chichester is so particular," exclaimed poor Dym in great vexation, as she ran up the terrace steps. She gave a great start as she turned the corner and saw Honor standing there alone: her attitude struck Dym as peculiar; her arms were hanging loosely by her side, and her face had an unaccountable paleness on it. As she caught sight of Dym she drew her breath with effort, and the colour came back. Dym felt a little frightened.

"Are you well, Miss Nethecote?"

"Perfectly so," drawing up her head a little haughtily; "the Squire has gone in to put away his gun. I was waiting for you. What a time you and Humphrey have been!"

"Yes, he was so tiresome," returned Dym, who was rather put out. Things were uncomfortable and mysterious, and she did not like it: why had Miss Nethecote influence with the Squire? and why had he nearly shot her one minute and been angry with her the next? and why should she be standing all alone on the terrace?

Honor gave one of her slow curious smiles at the girl's honest confession.

"So Humphrey bores you sometimes, does he? He is a little heavy, but so good. Ah, no one knows half his goodness. But we must not be standing out here; let us go to Mrs. Chichester."

Dym never enjoyed a meal less than she did that dinner; never had a quartette been less harmonious. Before the first course was over she longed for that tiresome Humphrey with all her heart. The squire especially seemed ill at ease; a certain excitement, usually foreign to him, was observable in his manners. He laughed and talked without ceasing, but the merriment was forced; now and then he made abrupt pauses, and looked scrutinizingly at Miss Nethecote.

Honor sat magnificent and silent; but now and then her hands were pressed closely together, and there was a firm closing of the beautiful

lips, as though they had determined not to smile. Once when Mr. Chichester spoke very sharply, almost unnecessarily so, to Stewart, and the poor lad coloured up painfully, she looked full at him, and then dropped her white lids and said nothing; a few minutes afterwards Guy called the boy gently to him, and bade him leave the room.

Just then Mrs. Chichester gave the signal for rising.

"You may send my coffee into the library, mother," Guy said, as he opened the door for them to pass; and Dym, as she drew back to let Miss Nethecote precede her, heard him whisper, "One turn on the terrace, Honor;" but Miss Nethecote shook her head.

"We have talked too long already, Mr. Chichester," standing up very straight and tall before him.

The Squire bit his lip.

"But if I promise to reconsider my decision?" and as she hesitated, "Mother, I have some papers to look over before to-morrow's post, and to settle a little matter in which Miss Nethecote has been pleased to interest herself; we will join you in the drawing-room by-and-bye."

"Very well, Guy;" then, as Honor still lingered, the Squire touched her hand lightly, and said, in a tone Dym had never heard before, "Come, Honor, come;" and Honor yielded.

Dym followed Mrs. Chichester into the drawing-room. The windows were opened on to the terrace; the white china lamps were

lighted; there was a soft halo of light round Mrs. Chichester, as she sat in her low chair and knitted placidly; a dusky moth brushed round the light; a bat wheeled suddenly in the darkness; there was a soft perfume of flowers. Dym, stealing to the window with a strange unknown pain at her heart, saw Honor's white dress on the dark terrace-path below, and heard the Squire's tones as they passed and repassed the window.

"Come, my dear, we will have a little reading. I have missed you sadly to-day." Another time these words would have sounded sweet to the girl, whom nobody but Will ever seemed to miss; but to-night she obeyed the summons impatiently; a jarring chord had been touched; a sudden secret sting betrayed the existence of Dym's old enemy.

Honor's presence at Ingleside somehow disturbed her.

"He has not spoken a word to me to-night. I am nothing—nothing to him," she cried rebelliously as she took the book.

"Are you tired, my dear? there is something *triste* in your voice," said Mrs. Chichester, whose acute ear had missed the genuine ring of enjoyment in the girl's monotonous tones.

"I don't know. I think I want Will to-night;" and, to her own surprise as well as Mrs. Chichester's, Dym suddenly burst into tears.

"Shut your book, my dear; come here to me," said her tender mistress. She stroked the girl's hair softly with motherly touches as Dym crouched on the floor beside her. I do not know

what pain, what infinite trouble suddenly swelled Dym's poor little heart to bursting; Dym had no words to express it; she could not tell his mother that Mr. Chichester was her friend, and that she was nothing to him. She only felt sad and forlorn all at once, like a child who wanted to be petted.

"If he would only say a kind word to me sometimes as he used," she thought, as she laid her head against Mrs. Chichester's satin gown; "he has been so strange, so unlike himself of late. Oh, if we could only have one of the old evenings in Paradise Row back again, I should be quite content."

Quite content! Poor Dym!

Little did she know how soon the "sweet summer of her content" would be overcast—when she should rue her woman's bitter knowledge, and pray for peace as one prays for salvation, only to come to it through the tears of a long pain.

But they who glean the aftermath must look on happy harvest-fields that others have reaped; and youth, though not the perpetual sunshine that poets will have it, or the perennial bulbul in bowers of roses, still wears its bandage of ignorance blissfully, and so the salt waves lap to its very feet before it says, "Alas, me, for my trouble is upon me!"

So Dym cried, she hardly knew for what reason, except for home-sickness and Will, and a longing for kind words from lips she had learnt to revere. And Mrs. Chichester petted and made much of her, and called Dorothy to ad-

minister drops of red lavender for the vapours, for so she had called them in her youth; and Dym dried her eyes and let herself be comforted, and held up her face like a very child to be kissed; and neither of them knew that a chord had been touched that night, which in the years to come would swell into an infinite diapason that would fill all her woman's universe with happiness or woe.

Dym was a little ashamed of her outbreak, and wanted to go on with her book by-and-bye; but Mrs. Chichester would not let her. "Tell me about your day instead, my dear;" and Dym was beginning rather a lame narrative, when Mr. Chichester came in alone.

"What a time you have been, Guy! and where is Honor?"

"She is just speaking to Stewart in the library. Mother," kneeling on one knee on her footstool and laying forcible hands on her knitting, "mother, I have been a brute to you these last few days."

Mrs. Chichester laid her hand fondly on her son's shoulder, and the colour came into her faded cheek. Guy's bearded lips touched the thin hand almost reverently before he took it in his own.

"Come, mother, confess I have been horribly churlish."

"My darling boy!" and then her glance added, "but we are not alone."

Dym had one of his old looks then.

"What, are you there, Miss Elliott! I did

not see you. Well, as you have been the witness of my rudeness to my mother you ought to hear my apology too. We don't mind Miss Elliott, do we, mother? she is a harmless little thing."

How the harmless little thing quivered and crimsoned under the old kind smile and words!

"She has been fretting, Guy. I don't think she has been well to-night, she wants her brother," explained Mrs. Chichester, anxious to turn her son's attention from herself.

"What, Will Clericus? I shall be seeing him next week. What will you give me, Miss Elliott, if I bring him back with me?"

Dym clasped her hands.

"Oh, do please, Mr. Chichester," she cried fervently.

He laughed, and then his tone changed.

"What, are you so home-sick and Will-sick as all that, poor child? What have you been doing with her mother?"

But Mrs. Chichester's face had grown anxious again.

"O Guy, you are not going up to London?"

"We will talk about that presently, *mère chérie*. Are you sure you have forgiven me?"

"My dearest boy, pray do not talk so!" her hand wandering lovingly in the thick long beard—certainly in any woman's eye Guy Chichester would have been a son of whom to be proud. It was touching to see the strong, stalwart figure in that boyish attitude. In spite of the light manner, the brown face looked troubled and agitated, and the honest eyes were full of pain.

"Guy, for my sake, please do not talk so."

"It is all my cursed temper. I ought not to have plagued you about that boy. I can see it has made you ill. Never mind, mother, I have repealed the sentence."

"Thank you, my dear; but, Guy," hesitating, as though not sure of her ground, "must you, will you go to London?"

"Yes, mother, I must," an emphasis on the words, and rising abruptly.

Mrs. Chichester sighed, but did not dare to press the point; and a moment after Honor came in very silently and seated herself by Dym.

Mr. Chichester moved restlessly about the room, taking up articles and putting them down again; and then he muttered something about his papers, and left the room; and soon after that Honor rose and said "Good-bye."

She bent down to kiss Mrs. Chichester rather reluctantly, as though constrained by her hand—her eyes had a weary light in them, she looked pale, almost ill.

"You have succeeded; thank you, Honor," observed Mrs. Chichester gratefully; but Miss Nethecote put out her hand with an abrupt gesture as though to stop her.

"No, don't thank me. I always said I would do anything to help you. Why," as Mrs. Chichester tried to speak, "I would do as much as that for my enemy."

"Am I your enemy, Honor?" very sadly.

"God knows!" returned Miss Nethecote rather wildly—they had both forgotten Dym's

presence, and now she quietly stole from the room; "sometimes I think you are all my enemies, for you have robbed me of my peace amongst you."

"You have not forgiven me, then," reproachfully, "or him either."

"Have I not?" returned Honor almost inaudibly; "then I trust that I may never be forgiven. Poor Guy, poor Guy!" in a tone of ineffable gentleness.

"Then why is Guy's mother so hateful to you?" pleaded Mrs. Chichester wistfully, as she looked up at the majestic young figure beside her. There was something almost sublime in Honor's attitude; but as Mrs. Chichester spoke the sweetness and calm suddenly broke up.

"No, not hateful. Why do you speak so?" she exclaimed hurriedly; "do you know the name I might have called you? For your son's sake, if not for mine, never say that again. But all the same," relapsing into mournfulness, "you are not my friend."

"Why not, Honor?"

"Was it my friend to bring me face to face with him this night, of all nights in the year? When you knew, you saw that he remembered it, was it generous," with a sudden spasm of pain on her beautiful face, "to make me come here and plead for another, when he could not plead for himself? Hush," stooping down and kissing her again, as Mrs. Chichester's lip trembled, "you could not help it; you only think of him, never of me."

"O Honor, if you would only think of him too!" but at the stern set look of Honor's mouth she stopped.

"Think! and have I not thought? Ah, you are no friend of mine, or you would not subject me to this. Do you know these things are killing me, actually killing me, who thought myself too strong to suffer," she added with a dreary smile.

"Forgive me, Honor," replied Mrs. Chichester humbly. "Let us say no more. I never meant to pain you like this."

"I have betrayed myself," returned Honor, putting her hand to her breast. "I never meant to speak to his mother in this way—never. Why will you not understand that I must come and go at my own will, not at his or yours?"

"I thought you had learnt to be happy here again," faltered Mrs. Chichester.

"Happy! do you know I was madly, foolishly happy when he was talking to me just now? The very sound of his voice, the touch of his hand, makes me happy. I like to see my influence over him, and to know he will never forget me—never, never. Ah," hiding her face in her hands, "ought I to come here with these feelings? Mrs. Chichester, you must be generous and release me."

"I cannot, Honor. What should I do without you sometimes?"

"When I promised to come up here when you or he were in trouble I never thought how he would try my resolution. He is not

generous, either. In my moments of weakness he comes to me. Did you hear how he called me Honor to-night?"

"The old habit is too strong for him, I suppose."

"It is too strong for both of us. I have forbidden it, but he refuses to obey me. To-night the tenderness of his tone almost constrained me to cry out to him to stop. Oh," weeping as though her heart would break, "to feel that I could follow him through the world cheerfully, oh, so cheerfully, and yet not to dare to trust him again!"

"Honor, why will you persist in this? Guy is a changed man now."

"I know it. Perhaps I see it, too. No, Mrs. Chichester, don't tempt me. Where he has not succeeded you will not. You are a good woman, you mean well, but I cannot trust him yet. Besides," in a firmer voice, "I have promised Humphrey."

"But you will not wait long, Honor?"

"That will depend. Sometimes I think that Guy and I are not meant for happiness. Ah, now you have made me cry, and Humphrey will be angry. He always watches my face when I have been here. Good-night, Mrs. Chichester."

"Good-night, Honor. I am afraid I have been a little hard on you after all."

"You did not mean to be. I have not been good to-night. I am not a saint yet, you see;" and with a mournful smile Honor left the room.

Mrs. Chichester rocked herself to and fro with an agitated face when she was left alone. "No, I am not her friend. I cannot love her. She is right. My poor boy! But they will never come together — never! To-night he could scarcely control himself, even in her presence. He is wasting his whole life, but he will never win her again. God help them both! I believe she would rather die than give up her own will."

The next morning, when Dym arose, somewhat unrefreshed and heavy-eyed, from her slumber, she learnt that the Squire had already left Ingleside, and was *en route* for London.

And soon after that she heard Miss Nethecote had been ill, and was going to spend a few weeks

CHAPTER II.

HUMPHREY'S WOOING.

IT was the middle of October when Guy Chichester left his home so abruptly. Dym wondered why his mother should fret so over a few days' absence. She had no idea that they would not see his face again till the Christmas bells sounded over the little valley.

Dym never called it the Happy Valley now; some brief mood of discontent was sweeping over our little heroine. Cinderella, in her prosperity, almost quarrelled with the magic wand that had transformed her. The cinder-wench, as the old Teutonic legends termed her, was sighing for her bed among the ashes again. The roses and sunshine had come into Dymphna Elliott's life; she fared softly, though her bread was the bread of dependence; she wore pretty tasteful dresses; she revelled in sweets and flowers; she drove out every day in a fine coach; even the pumpkin chariot had come to her; she had plenty of affection, no stint of indulgence and caresses; yet there were times when Dym's heart ached, and she wondered if she had not

happier thoughts when she sat on the throne of boxes in the little garret at Lansdowne House, looking out on the housetops to the green shimmering park beyond.

Dym had not yet rid herself of the unreality of her girlish dreams. She was still too dreamy and imaginative for practical life.

"You are enjoying too much of the *dolce far niente,*" Will wrote once, when some trace of this vague discontent had made itself felt in her letter. "You have not enough to do, pet, and are growing fanciful again. I wish I could draft you off to St. Luke's for a few weeks, and give you some hard, rousing work to do. Your Squire, as you call him, is doing the work of ten men amongst us. I can't half tell you how glad I am to get him back again."

How Dym sighed over that letter! A visit to St. Luke's, ay, even one talk with Will, would have healed the brief distemper. Mrs. Chichester was a very gentle companion, but Dym found even gentleness tedious at times. She wanted work, variety, plenty of occupation. The monotony, the ceaseless routine of letter-writing, useful reading, and endless knitting and woolwork chafed and wearied her. She would have worked her fingers to the bone out of pure love and gratitude to Mrs. Chichester. Yet there were times when she would rather have been at Woodside slaving among the children, and listenening to the long list of Mrs. Grey's ailments, than be sitting in that stately drawing-room.

Perhaps in the Squire's absence Ingleside was

a somewhat quiet abode for a young active girl. Dym, who was determined to be good, generally cured her irritability by taking Kelpie for a long run across the darkening November fields. The cold air quickened the young blood in her veins, and freshened her up for the long evenings.

Very often she met Humphrey returning from the home farm with Kiddle-a-wink at his heels. Humphrey would look pleased as the little figure in the Scotch tweed came running towards him in the twilight. Dym's large dark eyes would light up with merriment when she saw him. She and Humphrey had become fast friends. "What a child you are to be running with that dog!" he would say, taking her little hand with clumsy gentleness. One day he brought her a beautiful pheasant's wing to adorn her new hat. "It will just match your dress. You will be a regular Brownie then," he said one day.

"Do the Brownies haunt the fields on November evenings?" exclaimed Dym. "Brownies and Kelpies—I wonder you are not afraid of such tricksy spirits, Mr. Nethecote."

Humphrey laughed, but somehow the name ever afterwards clung to her.

Honor had not come home with her brother; a cousin of theirs, almost the only relation they had still belonging to them, had been lately widowed, and Honor had for a little while assumed the management of the bereaved household.

"She will come home directly I send for her," said Humphrey ruefully, one day when he

had been somewhat bemoaning his dulness; they had met at the stile as usual, which might have been christened "the trysting-place," only Dym was too innocent to perceive that design, and not accident, brought honest Humphrey so often across her path; "it is not that I don't want her, for the Cottage is sadly lonesome without the Duchess, but I think the change is doing her good, and it is early days to leave poor Helen."

"Why don't you come up and see us sometimes? I am sure Mrs. Chichester and I find it dull enough," owned the girl frankly—she made Humphrey laugh at her description of the state and loneliness of their evenings at Ingleside.

"We have all the courses just as though the Squire were here, and we always pass them as a matter of course," went on Dym dryly; "sometimes the vicar and Mrs. Fortescue come up to dinner, and then we have wax candles in the drawing-room instead of the white china lamps; but it is just as dull—the vicar always goes to sleep, and wakes up with an apology when the coffee comes in, and Mrs. Fortescue plays the same pieces over and over again; and when I am tired of yawning," finished naughty Dym, "I pick up Mrs. Chichester's dropped stitches and go to bed."

Humphrey gave one of his great laughs over the girl's sarcasm; Dym chattered nonsense to him quite frankly now. The result of this conversation was that Humphrey came up to Ingleside the very next evening, and listened to

Dym's reading, and made himself so agreeable that Mrs. Chichester gave him a general invitation during his sister's absence, of which he was not slow to avail himself. Dym honestly owned she was glad of this addition to their party; she read with greater zest when Humphrey was there to point out the jests with his gruff laugh. Mr. Nethecote was not intellectual, but he made very shrewd remarks at times. Dym, when she laid down her book, would direct a brisk little artillery of conversation against him, that first amused and then somewhat scandalized Mrs. Chichester.

"My dear, you must remember Mr. Nethecote is not forty yet," she said once; "you talk to him sometimes as though he were quite an elderly man."

Mrs. Chichester did not quite explain her meaning, and Dym only laughed off the rebuke; it never entered her head that her dark eyes and winsome face might become dangerously attractive to the worthy Yorkshireman. Dym would have tossed her pretty little head in scorn at such a notion. It was all very well for Mrs. Chichester to represent Humphrey as a sort of middle-aged youth; eighteen has its own ideas on the subject of forty; she persisted in treating Mr. Nethecote as though he were a favourite uncle or grandfather, all the more that he called her Brownie openly, and met all her jests with the same good-humoured tolerance.

"Brownies must play their tricks," he said once, when Dym had been teazing him for a

whole evening, and Mrs. Chichester had at last gently called her to order; Mrs. Chichester began to smile quietly to herself as she rattled her knitting-needles.

"Nothing could be better—these sort of girls generally prefer a man much older than themselves," she thought. "She will teaze him into brightness, and then make him happy in the end; what a good husband he will make her!"

Mr. Chichester laughed out loud over the next letter he received from Ingleside.

"Why is a good woman always a match-maker, I wonder? Do you know, my mother thinks she has found an excellent husband for your sister;" and as William Elliott looked up in astonishment, "Fancy Miss Elliott with a sober middle-aged lover of forty odd — Humphrey Nethecote, too; the most confirmed old bachelor in the whole of the three Ridings. I wonder whether my mother has a grain of probability in her fancy. Humphrey Nethecote—ha, ha!" and Mr. Chichester threw back his head thoroughly tickled at the idea.

Will laughed, but he was rather pleasantly excited too; he made Mr. Chichester give him the whole history of Humphrey's antecedents.

"I don't know but what it might be a good thing, only the child is so absurdly young," he said presently; but Mr. Chichester did not relax his air of amusement.

"Wait till you see them together first. I don't believe there's a word of truth in the whole story; Humphrey is too good for her—

he would bore her to death in the first twelve-month. Fancy a pretty little sparkling thing like that mated with Humphrey's slow wits. Well, not pretty exactly," as Will brightened up at this unexpected praise, "but taking, piquante—she'd better wait for a few years, and she'll find some one more to her liking."

"I am afraid of Dym," replied her brother slowly; those sort of natures are seldom happy. "Now that this subject has been started, I wish you would tell me honestly if Dym really satisfies your mother?"

"As far as I know, she does so entirely," replied Mr. Chichester frankly; "my mother is wonderfully well pleased with her; but, to tell you the truth, I do not think she has seemed quite so happy of late."

"How so?" demanded Will anxiously.

Mr. Chichester shrugged his shoulders.

"You know there are some children who are unreasonable enough to cry for the moon. I fancy your sister has one of these insatiable natures. She has too much mercury in her composition, is easily pleased and easily depressed; to look at her sometimes, no one would believe she has a temper, and yet one would never be surprised at an outbreak."

Either Dym had an eloquent face or Mr. Chichester read human nature too shrewdly, and in his own sadness found time to notice the passing clouds on a girl's brow.

Will sighed, for he knew from past experience this description was true.

"I have sent her to the right place to be broken in," he said with a smile. "Your mother's kindness will soften the hard places wonderfully; the poor child has been sadly knocked about, and has grown wilful with rough usage. I shall never be sufficiently grateful that she was placed under such loving protection."

"Broken in!" How little did William Elliott know how truly his words would be fulfilled. Poor little Dym! Ah, in the long years to come who would have recognised in the sweet-faced gentle woman the dreamy enthusiastic girl with the dark spirituelle eyes and quick vivacity, that could amuse herself at the expense of others, and laugh and cry in a breath?

Mr. Chichester never discussed the merits and demerits of his protégée again with her brother, and though Humphrey Nethecote was the principal topic in many succeeding letters, the subject was not revived between them. The Squire was too preoccupied and ill at ease to take much interest in a girl's love affair; his friendship with Will was as warm and unimpaired as ever, but he was as taciturn and sparing in his confidence as in the days when he was only Mr. Latimer.

As for Dym, she moped and brightened alternately at her own sweet will, in blissful ignorance of what Mrs. Chichester persisted in regarding "the wooing o't," but perhaps her denseness might be excused, for in a girl's eyes nothing could be more unlike a conventional

wooer; and to tell the truth, she was far too much absorbed in her hero-worship to tolerate, or even suspect, commonplace courting.

The Squire's letters did much to reconcile her to his absence. Guy was a generous correspondent, and reported all his doings dutifully to his mother; and as there was always a kindly mention of Dym at the end, she was more than satisfied.

"Tell Miss Elliott that I have done my best, but that Will Clericus has decided to be immolated on the shrine of duty, and will not leave St. Luke's at present," he wrote once; and another time he discharged himself of a lengthy message Edith had sent to her *pro tem.* governess. "I suppose Miss Elliott will not be interested in the details of her enemy's wedding," he finished in another paragraph, "so keep the description of the dresses to yourself, mother. Mrs. Vivian shed plenty of crocodile tears, but Aunt Celia was too much afraid of spoiling her green moire antique; she told me how much a yard it was, and how grieved she was at your absence, in one breath."

"Why did you not go to the wedding, Mrs. Chichester?" asked Dym, with some natural surprise—she knew Mrs. Tressilian was her only sister. Mrs. Chichester drew herself up a little stiffly.

"Beatrix is my niece, it is true; but she is no favourite of mine—she behaved very badly when she was down here, only Guy chooses to ignore it. Ah, my dear, men are all alike, they

forgive a pretty woman anything; but for my part I pity Colonel Delaire."

Dym's assent was decidedly vehement.

"He is such a handsome man—a capital officer too, all the regiment speak well of him. Was it true that Miss Tressilian wanted him to sell out?"

"I believe so," was the reluctant answer. She did not choose to tell her eager listener that Beatrix had nearly broken off the whole affair when he refused, and was only roused to the sense of her dishonourable conduct by her cousin's quiet scorn. Guy had been Colonel Delaire's friend all through; the wedding, and not St. Luke's, had really detained him in London; there was no end to the torment Beatrix inflicted on the unfortunate bridegroom elect; she trifled, she delayed, on one pretext or other, till, with the late autumn, Mr. Chichester came up at his aunt's request to talk her into acquiescence. "No woman has a right to treat a man so," he said to her with salutary sternness. "Either you are engaged to Frank and must marry him, in reasonable time, or, as your guardian, I insist that you at once break with him."

Guy Chichester's guardianship had virtually ceased with Beatrix; but he still had some right of control over her property, certain matters being entrusted to him by his uncle's will until such time when the two remaining daughters should marry or attain their twenty-fifth year.

"You must give Frank and me an answer

to-morrow," he returned. "I am sorry to tell you, Beatrix, that your conduct to him displeases me greatly; if you have ceased to care for the man, why not give him up?"

But Beatrix would not give him up; he was well connected and of good family; he had excellent prospects, and she had been formally congratulated by all her friends. Perhaps her cousin's coldness settled her in this decision, for he was thoroughly offended, and would pay her no sort of attention, lavishing all his fondness on Edith, till she almost hated the child, and abandoning her to Colonel Delaire's tender mercies.

And how tender they were no one but Beatrix knew! Frank Delaire was madly in love with his reluctant bride. By-and-bye Beatrix made a virtue of necessity, and yielded at last with a very bad grace. She made Guy promise to give her away, and fixed an early date to prevent his leaving London.

"Frank and I are going to pay our promised visit to Ingleside in the spring," she said, as she stepped into the travelling carriage that was to take her away. The deed was done. Beatrix looked pale, but wonderfully composed and very beautiful, as Guy wrote word to his mother: but he hinted outright that Frank was a noble fellow, and deserved a better wife. "It was a wretched affair; a *mariage de convenance;* thoroughly heartless, like Beatrix herself. I am glad, after all, you did not come to it, mother; it has sickened me of London life completely."

"Thoroughly heartless. Beatrix never cared but for one person all her life; poor Colonel Delaire, indeed!" ejaculated Mrs. Chichester, as she folded up the letter. Beatrix was her sister's child, and it was very unsatisfactory. Mrs. Chichester had old-fashioned notions on the subject of love and marriage, which would hardly have accorded with her niece's ideas. She turned with a sort of relief to Humphrey's homely courtship, which would probably be as slow and steady as old Time itself. "He has given her a posy. I suppose he will propose about next Christmas twelvemonth, unless Honor takes the matter into her own hand," thought Mrs. Chichester, with unconscious irony.

Dym received one brief note from Honor before November was quite over.

"If your face does not belie you, you have a good heart," wrote Miss Nethecote in her brief, business-like way. "I wish you would exercise it a little, and go and see Mrs. Grey sometimes."

Dym showed the missive to Mrs. Chichester, who smiled and said, "Just like Honor; she always wants to set other people to work."

"I have not enough to do," argued Dym a little sadly with herself. "Will always said the more I widened my interest the more I should forget myself. I think, Kelpie, we had better go."

The next evening Humphrey turned away from the stile with an odd feeling of disappointment, for no slight young figure came through

the gloom; the lights were burning in the Cottage windows; the chimes from the little church rang crisply through the air. Humphrey walk back disconsolately, thinking his Duchess had been away a long time, and that his fireside was growing very lonely, when, near his own gate, something came bounding and leaping upon him, and a moment after a little cloaked figure stole to his side.

"You did not expect to see me here, did you, Mr. Nethecote?" laughing as she spoke.

"I suppose Brownies do play unexpected tricks sometimes," returned Humphrey, feeling strangely happy all at once. Dym's face looked dimpled and rosy; one lock of hair had escaped and lay in natural curl on her shoulder—even the Squire must have owned she looked pretty.

"I have been playing with the children—oh, such a romp, and they have pulled my hair down," trying to tuck it up under the pheasant feather. "Such dear children. I like Rupert nearly as well as my favourite Berwick. I have been there all the afternoon."

"What has Mrs. Chichester done without you?" asked Mr. Nethecote. Something made his voice sound unusually gruff; he was tired with a long day's work, nevertheless he turned back and walked with her to Ingleside. The lights in the village burnt more brightly now: as they came up to the stile, he stopped to bid Dym admire the young crescent of a moon. "How delicious this cold air is—it has made me hungry for dinner!" cried Dym, who was in ex-

cellent spirits and saw beauty in everything. She parted from Humphrey without one thought of his long dark walk alone. The patient man set his face homeward, and plodded back through the wind again; these middle-aged lovers have a wonderful constancy and perseverance of their own.

I suppose Humphrey, in his secret soul, feared his suit might be hopeless; but he was a strong, silent man, and given to much quiet determination of purpose. "She is young and weak, and some day she may need the protection of an honest man," he said to himself. He held to this thought with a strange tenacity through the girl's fitful humours. "It is not likely a soft little creature as she is will fancy such a plain, homely fellow at once; but one day perhaps, when she is lonely and knows me better, she may let me take her home."

And this was the beginning of the slow wooing which every one perceived long before Dym herself was startled by it. Dym found her second visit to Mrs. Grey so welcome that she repeated it on every leisure afternoon. It was not very easy to replace Honor; but she began to make her own mark in the neglected household. Rather hesitatingly she volunteered small services, which were eagerly accepted. Rupert had his Latin lessons again; with the others Dym was only a playmate, but she was very bright and useful, and won Mrs. Grey's heart by her ready sympathy. One thing she noticed, as she told Honor afterwards: Mr. Grey was not

less irritable, but he was very kind and attentive to his wife.

"I saw him sit beside her sofa for a long time, watching her when she was asleep one evening. When he went out, I am sure there were almost tears in his eyes. I can't think what makes him so gentle to her; for she is more ailing and fretful than usual."

It had come into Dym's mind to write this to Honor. She scrawled a long letter to her when she was sitting on the rug one evening in the twilight, waiting for Esther to wake. Miss Nethecote sent a short hearty note of thanks by the next post.

"Your letter has done me good," she wrote; "it brought a strong sweet whiff of the Happy Valley with it. I am afraid I am growing homesick and selfish; only pray do not tell Humphrey so. Dear Miss Elliott, I am beginning to look upon you as a friend. I rather suspect there is some sort of elective affinity between us. Is that romantic enough to suit you? Anyhow, write to me whenever you feel charitably disposed, and tell me how Humphrey looks. From what you tell me of affairs at Woodside, I am afraid Esther is decidedly worse, and her husband knows it. When will the Squire come back to his own?—Yours, HONOR."

This second brief note made Dym very happy. She wrote again, and then again—brisk little despatches, full of Birstwith gossip. Dym had

a clever racy humour of her own. Honor's letters were rather ponderous beside them; they were like her talk—quiet, and to the point.

"I wish the Squire would come back to his own," Dym thought to herself, as she returned from Woodside rather later than usual one evening. Mrs. Chichester was dining at the Vicarage. Mrs. Fortescue, who entertained somewhat conventional ideas about companions and dependents in general, very rarely included Miss Elliott in these invitations.

The vicar, who had taken a fancy to Dym's bright eyes and quiet ladylike manners, once remonstrated with his wife on the subject.

"It must be very dull for the poor little thing, being with Aunt Constance morning, noon, and night. I think, when Guy is away, you might safely ask her sometimes, Katherine. She is a great favourite with Berwick."

"It will only be taking her out of her place. Aunt Constance makes an unnecessary fuss over her already," returned his wife dryly. "I have no opinion of Aunt Constance's prudence in the matter. I hear she insisted on taking her one evening to Mrs. Trevor's, and young Trelawney flirted dreadfully with her."

"No one will flirt with her here, my dear," replied the vicar mildly; "Berwick is too young."

"Perhaps not, Latimer; but I cannot say that I care for Miss Elliott; she is not respectful enough in her manners. Why, she was almost rude to me one day when I gave her a little advice about this same George Trelawney. 'If

I flirted, it would not be with boys,' she said with such a toss of her head. And I am sure she is not particularly good-looking, and might be supposed to be grateful for a little admiration; and George, though he is stupid, is as rich as Crœsus. But I suppose she has other game; these girls are so sly," finished Katherine, with a superb sweep of her dress across the drawing-room.

Guy Chichester was right when he shrewdly argued that Mrs. Fortescue ruled with a rod of iron. Latimer Fortescue was too indolent to contest his wife's will in trifles, though now and then he would electrify the household by suddenly assuming the reins of government, and would prove himself both stern and despotic; but these occasions were rare. Katherine had seldom to cower beneath her husband's wrath, though report said she could be meek enough at these times.

Mr. Fortescue said nothing more about Miss Elliott's dulness at the Great House; but he was always very civil to her when he visited there. Perhaps he would hardly have been so polite if he had known Dym always called him "the marble priest; he polishes up his sermons till there is not a point left in them; they could not cut or touch one anywhere. Will is a rough diamond compared with him," as she told Honor one day; but with all his pride, she preferred him infinitely to his wife, whom she detested with an honesty that amused the Squire greatly.

Mrs. Chichester was, as usual, dining alone at the Vicarage; and Dym had taken advantage of her absence to pay a long visit to Woodside. There had been a heavy fall of snow all the afternoon. It was Christmas-eve; Mrs. Fortescue and her party—a few lively young girls, London cousins—had been putting up wreaths of evergreens in the church all day; but in spite of Mrs. Chichester's hint, Dym had not been asked to join the decorators.

Dym, who loved this special work, was a little disappointed and put out; Miles and Stewart and the female servants were busily working up at the Great House; and she decided to vent her spleen on turning the sitting-room at Woodside into a perfect bower of holly. She kept this sturdy resolution, to the great delight of Rupert and Edgar, and even Mr. Grey himself; he came in from his rounds rubbing his hands from the cold, and exclaimed loudly at the unwonted sight.

"Doesn't it look pretty, Edward?" said his wife; and there was actually a smile on her lips as she spoke. "The children say Miss Elliott is another Santa Claus now Honor is away. And look what Honor has sent us," she continued with tears in her eyes, as she showed her husband the little pile of winter garments Honor's kindly fingers had sewn for them. "And Mrs. Chichester has sent us a turkey, and Mr. Nethecote a hare and some game; and Mrs. Trevor has put up such a hamper of good things for the children."

"They are all very good," returned Mr. Grey in a subdued voice. For a little while the lines left his face, as he sat holding his wife's hand and watching the workers. Dym was a little pale with her labours as she wished them good-night. She had been hammering lustily with a heavy heart all the afternoon.

"Ah, when will he come to his own again?" she repeated mournfully, as she called Kelpie and went out into the cold dark road. The snow had ceased falling, and lay deep and thick on the untrodden fields; Kelpie bounded on, and rolled over and over on the crisp white bed; but Dym shivered and drew the grey cloak closer round her.

"I shall not enjoy Christmas-day one bit without him and Will." And then she gave a quick impatient exclamation, as a dark figure raised itself slowly from the stile.

"One gets tired of always seeing you there," she said pettishly, as Kelpie darted forward with a bark of delight.

"*Qui va là?* give me the watchword, Miss Elliott," returned a delightfully familiar voice; but not in Humphrey's gruff accents—neither was it Humphrey's loose angular figure that suddenly barred her way.

Something warm and electric ran through Dym's frame at the sound of that voice.

"*Qui patitur vincit!*" came in a sweet little voice, which was hardly as strong as usual. Was it excess of happiness that made Dym's tones so trembling?

"What made you think of that?" returned Guy somewhat abruptly, as he lifted her over the stile, and they walked on together.

"It is the motto of the Elliotts as well as the Chichesters," replied Dym softly. "'He conquers who endures;' it was quoting that that first made me call him Will Conqueror. Ah, Mr. Chichester, you have seen Will—how does he look?"

"Passably well—not a giant, perhaps. Strange that you should have said those words, and at this very spot too. Miss Elliott, do you believe in omens?"

"I am afraid I do."

"Don't be afraid," he replied warmly; "if I may accept this as an omen, you have made my welcome home a sweet one."

"Have I, Mr. Chichester?"

"Yes, my child."

He had never called her that before; and there was a gentle affectionate tone in his voice as he spoke. Was he glad to see her? Dym thought that he was. The wind blew coldly from the hills, and a few more flakes were falling; but Dym did not shiver now; she had forgotten the cold and the darkness as she followed the tracks Guy Chichester made in the snow.

"Tread thou in my footsteps boldly. Do you feel like good King Wenceslaus' page, Miss Elliott? I wont promise you that you will not feel the cold any longer though." And as Dym laughed, "By-the-bye, for whom was that

amiable greeting intended when you came up to me just now?"

"Not for you, Mr. Chichester. Ah, I am so glad you have come home." *Loyal je serai durant ma vie* might have been Dym's motto. She brought out her words with a great sigh of relief.

If Mr. Chichester were surprised at the girl's enthusiasm he kept it to himself. "Poor child, have you been dull?" he said in the same kindly paternal tone. "What has my mother been about, I wonder? She ought to have taken you to the Vicarage."

"Mrs. Fortescue did not ask me," was the low response.

"So I suspected. Ah, well, Katherine has not found her Petruchio yet. Latimer is not a good shrew-tamer. I must give her ladyship a hint on the subject one of these days."

"Oh, please do not, Mr. Chichester. I am far happier at Ingleside. I know Mrs. Fortescue does not like me," implored Dym somewhat frankly.

"My Cousin Katherine has her whims, as other people have. As I intend that you shall be received into Birstwith society, and her ladyship aspires to the leadership of that society, I shall see that this negligence is repaired." Dym never dared to contradict when the Squire spoke in this severe tone; he was evidently displeased at his cousin's haughtiness; but when he next spoke he had resumed his tone of pleasant raillery.

"So you don't like the Vicarage, eh?"

"I never feel at home there," was the honest answer.

"Latimer is kind to you, isn't he?"

"As kind as he knows how to be. He chills one a little. I like the boys best."

"They have a lot of young people with them to-night. I came up with Trevor, and he told me he and his wife were going up to supper after service. The boys are going to play snapdragon, much to the vicar's disgust. Don't you think it is a shame to marry a clergyman, and to act contrary to his opinions?"

"Mrs. Fortescue thinks eves and vigils are popish," returned Dym wickedly.

"I know she does. Latimer will shut himself up in his study, and make believe he is studying his Christmas sermon. Lat is a good fellow, and hates making a fuss; and after all there is no sin in snapdragon."

"I think they ought all to go to church if he wishes it," returned Dym with a little decision.

"Why aren't you there then, instead of roaming about the fields and addressing uncivil speeches to some persons unknown? You have not told me yet whom you are so tired of seeing."

Dym felt rather foolish at this question—was the Squire plaguing her on purpose?

"I was afraid it was Mr. Nethecote," she stammered. "He is always about the fields of an evening."

"Oh, indeed," was the pointed answer; but Dym could not see the smile that accompanied it.

"I wish Miss Nethecote would come back, and that would keep him more at home," observed Dym, who was rather nettled at the Squire's tone.

"What, has she not returned? how is that?" he asked quickly.

"A cousin of theirs has lost her husband lately, and Miss Nethecote is remaining with her and the children."

"Helen Stewart. Ah, an old playmate of Honor's. Is it the loss of his sister's company that has given old Humphrey these roaming habits, I wonder? Talk about the—you know what, Miss Elliott, there he is, I declare. I say, Nethecote!"

"Why, it is never the Squire!" came in broad accents through the darkness.

"Why shouldn't it be, man? You didn't think I had turned into a Londoner, did you?"

"Almost," was the dry response, as the two men shook hands; and then Humphrey peered in his short-sighted way through the gloom.

"Miss Elliott is here, Humphrey."

"Ay, ay!" brightening up. "You have stayed over-long at Woodside, surely, Miss Elliott?"

"I am not accountable to you for the time I spend there, am I, Mr. Nethecote?" was the sulky answer, for Dym was cross at having her *tête-à-tête* broken up; she so seldom enjoyed a word with the Squire, and now Humphrey had spoiled her pleasure.

But Mr. Nethecote had a staunch friend in the Squire. "Come, come, that's the second un-

civil speech I have heard from your lips to-night, Miss Elliott. I wont have old Humphrey snubbed in my presence. As my mother's out I've ordered tea in the library; and if you promise to be amiable, and make it for both of us, I will give you a dozen choice anecdotes of Will Clericus' sayings and doings. There's a bargain. Nethecote, you'll bear us company, will you not?"

"If I shall not be in Miss Elliott's way," was the rueful answer. But Dym, who was already ashamed of her petulance, confirmed the Squire's invitation so prettily that Humphrey cheered up again.

That evening was full of perilous sweetness to Dym. Mrs. Chichester sitting in the Vicarage drawing-room, and wishing Miss Elliott could be with her, little thought how happily her young companion was employed. The library was Mr. Chichester's private sanctum, and except for changing the flower vases in the early morning, Dym had never been invited to cross the threshold. Mrs. Chichester would sit there sometimes of an evening, when they had to discuss particular business; but Guy was chary of such invitations even to his mother.

It was a small room, but fitted up with the greatest taste and fastidiousness, panelled in dark oak; the carved bookcases were of the same wood, and the hangings to the deep bay-window were of violet velvet.

The lamps were lighted, a splendid wood fire burnt on the hearth, the pine logs diffusing a sweet spicy smell as they burnt. Kelpie stretched

himself out lazily on the black-bear rug. Dym, sitting behind the silver urn, with her brown dress brightened up with a breastknot of holly and winter's roses, looked such an image of girlish content and youthfulness, that Guy caught himself wondering once or twice whether Humphrey after all was good enough for her, and whether there could be any truth in his mother's supposition.

He rather thought there was, as he saw how Humphrey blinked his hazel eyes, and watched her every movement after tea. Dym fetched her work, and sat down demurely enough by the centre table. Mr. Chichester had finished his budget of news from St. Luke's, and was quietly discussing home affairs with Humphrey. Mr. Nethecote's answers were hardly as shrewd as usual; a pretty little rose tint was on Dym's usually pale cheeks, the lace ruffle just suited the dainty white throat. Heaven knows how fair that girlish figure had grown in honest Humphrey's eyes, who just twelve years ago had buried his young betrothed, the sister of that very Helen Stuart whose desolate home Honor was at present brightening.

Few people save the Squire knew the history of that early engagement of Humphrey's. Katie Murray was only Dym's age, a young governess of eighteen, when her grave Cousin Humphrey fell in love with her. She was a bright sonsie-looking girl, very fair; and yet Humphrey, in spite of Dym's olive complexion and dark hair, always would have it she reminded him of Katie.

Humphrey nearly broke his honest heart when he lost his sweetheart. Kate was not clever, but had transferred a very warm, affectionate heart into her cousin's keeping; she succumbed to a fever she had caught in nursing her little pupils. The pretty head was shorn of its long, fair tresses when Humphrey next saw it, and the rosy lips were dry and blackened with fever. "Ah, well, I shall see my girl in heaven," he said, as he turned away.

He spoke very little of his sorrow, even to his sister—these reticent natures suffer silently; some of the bitterest tears Honor ever shed were for her brother. She told Guy Chichester that she felt abashed by Humphrey's goodness and resignation. "He tries to keep bright, that I may not be saddened by his sorrow; but I can see what the effort is to him."

"You both spring from the same parent stem, Honor," he said, smiling; "you and Humphrey live your feelings instead of talking about them." But this was hardly true of either brother or sister—they were slow in attaching themselves. Humphrey especially suffered from that thoroughly English disease, *mauvaise honte;* but both could be passionately demonstrative at times to the object of their affection.

So Humphrey hardly bore himself as a lovesick girl would have done; but he honestly owned his affliction, and mourned long and faithfully for his sweetheart Katie, as he always fondly called her. The years went on, healing the old wound, and just as Humphrey seemed

settling into sober old bachelorhood, Dym's bright face and sprightly tongue begun to stir the sluggish impulse of the man's heart.

Dym worked on, happily unconscious that she was Humphrey Nethecote's fate. She had plenty of merry smiles and words for him to-night; content is rarely quarrelsome, and Dym was wondrously content.

"The king has come to his own again," she said to herself, with a certain amused consciousness of Guy's lordly looks and ways. He had bidden her a cheery good-night, and had gone out with Humphrey to bring his mother home; when he had taken a few steps in the snow he came back with a strange suppressed eagerness in his manner.

"Good-night, my good little prophet."

"Good-night, Mr. Chichester."

"*Qui patitur vincit.* I shall remember—it is the Chichesters' watchword; there, run in out of the snow, my child. Good-night again, God bless you;" and with a smile of singular sweetness Guy Chichester plunged into the dark shrubberies to rejoin Humphrey.

But neither of them knew Humphrey Nethecote's motto: *Per crucem ad coronam*—Through the cross to the crown.

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CHAPTER III.

BEATRIX ARRIVES AT INGLESIDE.

THE next few weeks passed happily enough.

Dym no longer complained of the dulness of Ingleside; the Squire's gun might be heard from morning till evening in the high lands behind the Great House, and the voices of the beaters as they struggled through the covers below. Kelpie accompanied his master. Humphrey lingered in vain beside the trysting stile. Dym had not ceased her visits to Woodside, bu she preferred taking the lower road. Very often a tall figure that she knew was not Mr. Nethecote's came bursting through the dead bracken, and vaulted lightly over the five-barred gate. How Dym's foolish little heart would beat as the slouching felt hat and brown beard came in sight! What a king he looked striding through the dim aisles of the wood! Guy had the trick of holding himself grandly; some men, ennobled by nature, carry their heads as though they wore a crown. Guy Chichester was one of these. "Where are you going?—you look like a grey ittle sister of charity in that cloak," he would

call out. Dym had a better companion than Humphrey for her homeward walk then.

The Squire had resumed his old sociable habits, and every man, woman, and child about the place basked gladly in his sunny moods again. Mrs. Chichester had recovered her cheerfulness; the evening hours flew by. Dym seldom read now. When the lamps were lighted Guy would come in and harangue them from the rug for hours, or at his mother's request place himself at the grand piano, and after preluding idly with one hand, burst forth with his glorious voice in chant or song. Dym learnt to accompany him, and after her first trial he made her sing with him, or practise the glees and choruses he was preparing for a grand musical entertainment to be given in his cousin's honour.

For, as Dym phrased it in her letter to Will, "the Great House was to be delivered into the hands of the Philistines."

Beatrix was coming to Ingleside.

Poor Dym, her heart sank as the Squire talked over arrangements with his mother. Mrs. Delaire had fixed the latter part of January for her promised visit. She and her husband had just returned from Nice, and Beatrix had determined that her first London season as a married woman should be inaugurated by a series of visits, commencing with Ingleside; Mrs. Tressilian and Edith were to join the party. Charlie Tressilian could not get leave of absence, but Guy had asked some friends of his mother's: Colonel and Mrs. Lintot with their son, just called to the

bar, and in ill-health from over-study; and a ward of Colonel Lintot's—a Miss Beauchamp, popularly reported to be an heiress.

Ingleside would be occupied from garret to basement. While Mrs. Chichester gave orders about the White Room, the Damask Room, the Red Room, and the Oriel Chamber, or consulted with her housekeeper as to the proper lodgment of Mrs. Delaire's, Mrs. Tressilian's, and Miss Beauchamp's maids, Guy summoned his head keeper and counted probable head of game, and sent invitations out to the neighbouring gentry for shooting parties, breakfasts, and luncheons *ad libitum.* There was to be a state dinner party, which would include the grandees of Birstwith and Ripley, and a musical entertainment which should be more general. By degrees this swelled into a dancing-party, then into a ball. Dym wrote out the invitations, and then went with Mrs. Chichester to order a fitting dress for the occasion.

Mrs. Chichester had not forgotten her young dependent's comfort; a small room on the second story was fitted up for her and Edith; Mrs. Chichester had got rid of the obnoxious Mrs. Vivian by promising that Miss Elliott should resume her former charge for the time. Dym looked grateful when she heard of this arrangement. She felt she would be lost amongst the gay crowd below, she argued a little pitifully when the Squire gave his orders that she was to accompany Edith every evening to the drawing-room; "no one will care to see me, and I shall

only feel shy and uncomfortable," she pleaded with a shrinking memory of Beatrix and her cold grey eyes; the near approach of her enemy saddened and oppressed her; "all my goodness will go when I hear her voice," thought the poor child to herself.

But the Squire only laughed away her objections; while Mrs. Chichester, under the vague idea that her scruples arose in some degree from her wardrobe, procured her a pretty evening silk in addition to her white muslin. "She will not feel so unlike any one else; and there is the dinner party and the evening at the Vicarage," she said, as though in apology for her extravagance. Dym gave an exclamation of delight when she saw Mrs. Chichester's choice, the very maize that the Harrogate shopman had selected as Dym's colour. "You are spoiling me dreadfully," she cried, kissing her hand with a pretty mixture of affection and gratitude. She laid away the shimmering fold of silk with a curious wonder of what Will would think of her in such a dress, and then with renewed courage peeped at the several rooms as she passed.

It was early afternoon, but bright fires already burnt in expectation of the various arrivals. Dym lingered longest in the dressing-room attached to the Oriel Chamber, where Edith was to sleep, but she passed the Damask Room with a sort of shudder. "I wonder why some people are a kind of moral east wind to one," she said to herself with a little shiver.

Guy Chichester in his black velvet coat passed

her in the lobby with a nod and smile. "There is the waggonette coming back from the station—the gentlemen are walking up, I hear. Just tell my mother our guests have arrived; she is in her room, I believe."

Dym peeped through the oaken balustrade, much as she had done at Lansdowne House; she could just catch a glimpse of Mrs. Tressilian's velvet and sables, and a hat with a long ostrich plume, that could belong to no other than Beatrix.

"Mother, you must come and welcome the bride," called out the Squire in cheery tones; "what have you done with Frank, Trichy?"

"He is walking up with the others," returned young Mrs. Delaire composedly; "it was all Colonel Lintot's fault, he would have it that there was no room in the waggonette. Do you know, Guy, Ingleside looks smaller to me than it used in the old days. I could not understand Adelaide's fever of admiration as we drove up."

Mrs. Delaire has such grand notions," returned a pleasant laughing voice, evidently Miss Beauchamp's.

"She has come home fresh from Italian palaces," replied her cousin good-naturedly. "Well, what did you think of Rome, Trichy?"

"Overrated as usual. Frank was enthusiastic enough for both—he hired a carriage and cicerone for three days. I never was more tired in my life—I was thankful when we got to Nice. What do you say, child?" freeing her mantle impatiently from Edith's grasp; "where is Miss

Elliott? How should I know?" with the haughty turn of the head Dym remembered so well.

They were still standing in the little corridor; the others had passed on into the dining-room. Mr. Chichester stooped and whispered a word into the child's ear, and she flew upstairs so quickly that Miss Elliott had scarcely time to rise from her stooping posture before she found herself clasped in her little pupil's arms.

Edith's ecstasies lasted till tea-time. She was overjoyed at seeing her governess again, and delighted with everything—with her little bed, with the rose-coloured curtains, and especially with the tiny snuggery that Mrs. Chichester had fitted up so prettily. Before Dym knew what she was about she had dragged up her brother-in-law to look at it.

Colonel Delaire was very good-natured. He looked at everything Edith pointed out, and admired the view extremely. He was evidently surprised to recognise an old acquaintance in Miss Elliott, though he was far too well bred to show it. At the child's request he partook of a cup of tea, though he put it down rather hastily when he heard Beatrix's voice in the corridor below.

"I asked Trichy to come up, but she said she was too tired. She has been round to the stables though with Cousin Guy," blurted out Edith in her usual thoughtless fashion.

Dym was sorry for the child's frankness when she saw Colonel Delaire bite his lip with an annoyed air. Edith crept on to her governess's

lap when he had gone, and shook her fair hair affectionately over her shoulder.

"Trichy was so cross when I asked her, and that made Frank come up instead. Don't you like Frank? he is always telling Trichy that she ought to be kinder to me. They had a quarrel once when Trichy behaved badly to mamma."

Dym tried to hush the child's confidence, but she could not help thinking over her words. There was a careworn look on Colonel Delaire's handsome face as though matrimony had not perfectly agreed with him, and a restless, anxious expression in his blue eyes when they rested on his beautiful wife that told volumes.

Dym was in nervous trepidation at the thought of the evening; she deferred her entrance into the drawing-room so long that the ladies had already left the dining-room, and were gathered round the fire. Dym was stealing away into a corner by herself, but Mrs. Chichester took her hand kindly and drew her into the circle. Mrs. Lintot and Miss Beauchamp both addressed her pleasantly; but Beatrix, who was standing somewhat apart from the others, only raised her eyes for a second and bowed coldly.

In spite of her dislike Dym could not refuse a tribute to her loveliness. Mrs. Delaire looked even more beautiful than Beatrix Tressilian had done. She was a little paler; and to a close observer there was still the same dissatisfied expression and a quick lowering of the white brows when anything displeased her; but her beauty was magnificent; and though it

needed nothing to set it off, she wore her white dress without jewel or ornament of any kind save the rich lace that adorned it.

She drew aside with a scornful air when Mrs. Tressilian beckoned Dym to a seat beside her. Dym, who was strangely ill at ease in her presence, was glad when the gentlemen came in, and she was at liberty to move to a distant table, where she turned over engravings with Edith or watched the various groups.

Colonel Lintot had a red face and a white moustache, and was a far more soldierly-looking man than Colonel Delaire. His wife was a brisk, cheerful little woman, prematurely faded by Indian suns, and looking far older than her husband. Their son was very unlike either—he was a tall, gentlemanly man; but an habitual stoop and a habit of wearing an eyeglass spoilt him.

Miss Beauchamp, who accompanied them, was very young, and not at all good-looking; but her sweet retiring manners charmed Dym from the first. In spite of her wealth and the grand estate in Wales that the Lintots were always talking about, she was very unaffected and natural, dressed simply, and seemed to study others' wishes before her own.

In Beatrix's presence she drooped a little. A sort of subdued sadness that will sometimes come over a plain woman in the presence of striking beauty was discernible in her manner. Dym ceased to wonder over it; her shrewd eyes soon guessed the young lady's secret. Adelaide Beauchamp's mild blue eyes grew pathetic and

then suffused with tears as evening after evening George Lintot lingered by Beatrix's side, as though fascinated in spite of himself.

If Beatrix guessed her pain she never spared her. She ruled over her cousin's drawing-room most despotically, to his infinite amusement. It was not his way to pay court to any woman; but he was very indulgent to her caprices, and treated her with frank kindness—contriving little plans for her diversions, and installing himself as her cavalier on all occasions of ceremony.

Poor Dym that first evening would have been very dull but for Miss Beauchamp's kindness. Night after night she crept away to her distant corner, in spite of Mrs. Chichester's solicitations, fearing lest her presence should provoke a fresh sneer from Beatrix.

Beatrix was not actively unkind. She left Miss Elliott alone for the most part, but there was a suppressed scorn in her manner when she addressed her that roused all the old bad feelings. While the other ladies took Mrs. Chichester's cue, and treated her with marked kindness, Beatrix would give her trifling commissions, not always civilly, in a way that brought her dependent position more prominently into notice.

"Had you not better ring for Randall?" Mr. Chichester said once in a tone of reproof when Beatrix had hunted Dym out from a distant corner to fetch her some article she had mislaid. Dym, who never dared to rebel in his presence, brought it with heightened colour and laid it down.

Beatrix said not a word of thanks; and as though to punish her for her incivility her cousin left her side abruptly and went to the other end of the room. There was certainly a little malice in Beatrix's treatment of Dym. She had always thoroughly disliked her; but Guy's chivalrous defence had deepened this into an active enmity. Beatrix had never forgiven her cousin for taking Miss Elliott to Ingleside; she had not forgotten his warm speeches on her behalf, and the anger with which he had rebuked her. He had parted from her with bitter words on both sides, and Beatrix was not likely to forgive the innocent cause of it all. Dym's presence at Ingleside was an affront to her—nay more, a constant reproach; and her haughty nature could not brook it quietly. Dym's pride often writhed under a covert sarcasm or a cutting speech that she alone understood. The Squire was not always there to defend her. In his absence Beatrix often contrived to make herself very disagreeable. Neither Guy nor his mother guessed the misery those days were to Dym. True to her motto, Dym scorned to complain, but she endured as badly as possible.

Men cannot understand this petty spite of women, for, with shame be it said, it is purely and entirely feminine. If Mr. Chichester had witnessed it all he would have understood it as little as later on he did Dym himself.

Whether purposely or not, he certainly took very little notice of his protégée at this time. Dym often went to bed weary and dispirited, to

cry over her lost happiness, as she called it. "You are so *triste,* as Mrs. Vivian calls it," Edith said to her one day. Edith scarcely recognised her light-hearted governess sometimes.

Ah, this sadness! it is a traitor in the citadel of the heart; it sits brooding over fancied ruins, while the enemy is taking the outworks. "Above all, beware of sadness," says an old father of the faith; and indeed despondency helps no one.

Dym's outworks were unguarded. While she indulged in discontented or envious thought, she grew less watchful, and, alas, less prayerful, over her words and acts; sometimes her abruptness startled Mrs. Chichester, and called forth a few chiding words. Dym was in no mood for reproof. Instead of waxing gentle, she relapsed into moodiness. The charge of her little pupil became a weariness instead of a pleasure; it hindered her visits to Woodside, which would have done her good. Sometimes when she and Edith took their walk, they would hear the voices of the shooting party; when the weather was mild the ladies would carry out their luncheon; Dym caught a glimpse of them once. Guy was sitting under a hedge laughing and talking with Frank Delaire, and Beatrix was leaning against the fence holding her cousin's gun. She had her green dress looped up picturesquely, and one of the sportsmen's bags slung across her shoulder. "You would do for Maid Marion, Trichy," Dym heard Mr. Chichester say. She turned away with an envious sigh as they plodded on through the rutty lane.

"It was the evening of the ball; five-o'clock tea was over, and most of the party had dispersed to prepare themselves for the evening; all but Dym, who always presided at this meal, and was waiting for Mr. Chichester and Mrs. Delaire, who was trying to finish a novel by the firelight.

"You will be late for dinner, Beatrix," remonstrated her husband as he left the room; but Beatrix only shook her fair head pettishly, and read on.

Dym sat listlessly watching the shadows and the play of the firelight on the walls, till the Squire came in, bringing a rush of cold air with him.

"What, Trichy, not dressing? I warned every one to be in time; to-night dinner waits for no man."

Beatrix shut up her book with a light laugh.

"Very well, most potent cousin;" and as Guy brought his teacup to the rug with a sociable air, "well, what have you been doing with yourself this afternoon?"

"Ask Mahomet."

"What, have you been riding?"

"Cela va sans dire."

"Oh, Guy, and never to ask me to join you!"

"I thought Frank wanted you."

Beatrix made a gesture of impatience. "Frank is always wanting me. I never thought one's husband would bore one so. Frank never seems able to write a letter now without my dictation."

"He shows he knows how to value a clever wife."

"Guy, when you pay compliments I always know you are in a good humour."

"So I am. Trichy, I have got a surprise for you. Guess who is coming this evening."

"Beatrix's eyes questioned her cousin's face closely before she answered. Guy's eyes were bright and dark; his whole mien was joyous.

"As though I need to guess," returned Beatrix a little contemptuously; her manner had changed.

"O, wise young judge—a second Daniel come to judgment! So you knew it was Miss Nethecote?"

"Of course," spoken calmly, but with a slight frown, and as though the subject did not interest her. She reopened her book.

Mr. Chichester looked a little disappointed at the reception of his news, and after lingering for a minute or two, left the room rather hurriedly.

When he was gone, Beatrix laid down her book again, and leaning her chin on her hand sat for a little while lost in thought. Dym, who was tired of her position, ventured to remind her that the second bell would soon ring.

"I am afraid you will be very late, Mrs. Delaire."

"What if I be?" was the haughty answer; but she rose notwithstanding, and then, as though a sudden thought struck her:

"Miss Elliott, do you know when Miss Nethecote returned?"

"I was not aware till this moment that she had returned," answered Dym, with perfect truth.

"Oh, perhaps you are not acquainted with her."

"On the contrary, we are very good friends," returned Dym rather abruptly; "but I have not seen her brother for some days."

"What, you know him too? a pretty fair specimen of a rustic farmer, is he not? I suppose," turning her long neck aside and speaking carelessly, "that she is still as handsome as ever?"

"Handsome is not the word," was the brief answer.

"Indeed!" looking at her now in surprise; "and what would you call her, Miss Elliott?"

"I should call her beautiful. I have never seen a face like Miss Nethecote's—never," returned Dym with sudden effusion.

"You have such a large experience, have you not?" spoken with Beatrix's old disdain; but she was evidently vexed and startled by Dym's earnestness.

Dym was not likely to abate her enthusiasm on that score.

"And she is as good as she is beautiful; I know Mr. Chichester thinks so."

Dym never knew why she made this rash speech; she said it thoughtlessly, and without attaching much importance to her words.

"What do you know about Mr. Chichester's likes and dislikes?" returned Beatrix in an

irritated manner; "do you think such observations are fitting in your position? Take care what you are about, Miss Elliott. My cousin will not brook a word on this subject."

"I—what have I said?" stammered Dym. "Every one praises Miss Nethecote; it cannot be any harm to say she is good. Then, as though rebelling against Beatrix's harsh manner, "And she is goodness itself."

A sudden passion whitened Beatrix's fair face —a sort of spasm crossed it.

"Good!" with a little laugh as she turned to leave the room. "Ay, if it be good to be the curse of Guy Chichester's life, as that woman has been his curse, and will be till he dies."

CHAPTER IV.

HALF TRUTHS MAKE MISCHIEF.

AS that woman has been his curse, and will be till he dies.

At Beatrix's terrible words Dym had shrunk back appalled. Honor, Guy Chichester's curse? Impossible; his good angel, rather. Mrs. Delaire's angry speech discomposed Dym sadly; she was getting loosed from her moorings, everything was wrong; there was mystery and discomfort round her, an undercurrent of trouble and bitterness that coloured everything.

Mrs. Delaire's manner was insupportable. "I will not bear it—why should I?" said Dym's old enemy.

Dym went up to dress for the evening, miserable and out of tune with everything; she had been looking forward to the party, but now she could enjoy nothing. She put on her beautiful dress listlessly, and went downstairs; in the corridor she came suddenly on Beatrix and Adelaide Beauchamp.

"Do let me help you," she heard Miss Beauchamp say persuasively; "the maids are so busy, and there is nearly half a yard of that beautiful lace torn."

"It was Kelpie's fault. Why should you trouble yourself, Adelaide? There is Miss Elliott; she will be glad to make herself useful—run back to Aunt Constance; she wants you. Miss Elliott, just fetch a needle and thread, please. I have torn my Honiton flounce." Beatrix spoke in some natural haste, her manner was not otherwise aggressive; but Dym chose to take umbrage at the old peremptory tone.

"Stewart, will you tell Mrs. Delaire's maid that her mistress wants her?" she returned quietly, passing on; but her self-possession was a little disturbed when she came suddenly on Mr. Chichester; he was standing in the doorway, and must have heard all.

"You are not very courteous to my guests, Miss Elliott," he said, with a slightly displeased air; and he went to his cousin's side, and questioned her anxiously as to the amount of damage. Dym's cheeks were burning at this well-merited rebuke when she went into the dancing-room. The band was tuning up and the guests beginning to arrive. Guy opened the ball with his cousin, and then dancing began in earnest. Dym had no lack of partners. Humphrey came up and claimed her at once, and others followed; but she danced without spirit, and answered her partners mechanically. She could not rally and enjoy herself; she had done wrong, and drawn down the Squire's reproof on her for the first time, and all her sunshine had vanished. In the middle of a dance she caught sight of Honor. Miss Nethecote had entered very

quietly, but Mr. Chichester made his way to her at once.

Dym felt a thrill of happiness when she saw the calm, beautiful face, but Honor did not see her, and the feeling vanished again.

She was tired, and sat watching the dancers; she was generally light of foot and unflagging in her energy, but now she had lost all zest for the exercise. "What makes me so cross? Why do I feel so suddenly sick of it all?" she said to herself, and she quite started when Beatrix's cold voice again addressed her: "Not dancing, Miss Elliott?"

"I am tired," answered Dym, curtly enough.

"So am I," was the astonishingly amiable answer, considering how Dym had treated her. "Can you make room for me on that seat?"

Dym moved rather ungraciously—some instinct warned her that any further conversation with Mrs. Delaire would endanger her equanimity; Beatrix did not long keep silence.

"Have you spoken to your favourite yet?—Miss Nethecote, I mean;" as Dym only arched her eyebrows and looked mystified.

"No; I don't think she has seen me."

"Indeed! the room is not so very crowded." Then, shaking her dress out carelessly, "I gave my cousin a hint not to dance with her too often, as even you had noticed his preference."

"Mrs. Delaire!"

"Well!"

"You never repeated my silly speech to Mr. Chichester?"

"Was it silly?" pulling a little bit of stephanotis out of her bouquet; "I thought you were in earnest. I only told him that you considered Miss Nethecote a sort of earthly angel, and that you believed he thought the same."

"Oh, how could you—how could you!" returned Dym in a suffocated voice. "What will he think of me?"

"He did not seem to like it, certainly. He looked black enough for a minute or two, and then he said he must send you to Miss Nethecote's to learn manners, as they had not improved lately."

A flash from Dym's dark eyes answered her.

"Mrs. Delaire!"—speaking passionately—"ah, it is like you to bring me into this trouble. What, have you not done me mischief enough, without following me here and spoiling everything?"

"You may blame your temper, not me," returned Mrs. Delaire composedly. She swept away in her lace and jewels, leaving Dym in a tumult of indignation. What were her troubles at Lansdowne House compared with this? She had maligned her to her best friend, and poisoned his mind against her. Dym had a shrewd notion how Guy Chichester's pride would be wounded by such a statement, exaggerated as it probably was.

Mrs. Delaire was not intentionally false in her representation of the Squire's wrath. For a moment he had been angry—nay, excessively angry—and then he had smiled, and said,

"Nonsense, Beatrix; you must have misunderstood her; I don't believe Miss Elliott would have the bad taste to say such a thing;" and as his cousin eagerly asserted the truth of Dym's unfortunate speech, adding, "You have no idea, how rude Miss Elliott can be, Guy," he had answered with a sigh:

"I am afraid I have just seen a specimen, Trichy. Poor child! we must send her to Honor to learn what real gentleness and politeness means;" in a tone that would have made Dym heartily ashamed of her bad humour if she had heard it.

But unfortunately Dym believed Mrs. Delaire's version, and her heart grew hard even against the Squire himself. "That he should say such a thing to her, when he knows how she hates me!" she thought, with a mixture of hurt feelings and pain; and then a hand was laid upon hers. Honor was standing beside her, leaning on Mr. Chichester's arm.

"Miss Elliott, sitting alone in a brown study," said the Squire gravely. He was evidently trying to speak as usual, but to Dym's eyes his face looked very stern. Miss Nethecote took the girl's hand and looked at her anxiously.

"What have you all been doing with her?—she looks sick and sad, like a little robin I took in once, half starved with cold. She wants warming, Mr. Chichester; you must give her to me."

"With all my heart," he answered more gaily. "Have you a recipe for the vapours, Honor? Miss Elliott looks as though she had been suffer-

ing from them. Is there anything amiss?" he continued, stooping down and eyeing her curiously.

"No," returned Dym sulkily. Mr. Chichester had forgotten his passing displeasure, but Dym thought he was laughing at her, and her colour rose dangerously.

"I do not think your gay crowd agrees with her," continued Honor's grave, kind voice. "I know just how she feels; lonely, and out of harmony with it all. You will come home with me and rest for a few days, will you not, Dym?"

"I would rather stay here," replied Dym inaudibly, and feeling as if the tears would come in another moment. She was just in that state of soreness when sympathy aggravates instead of soothes, and in her present mood Nidderdale Cottage offered no attraction. One must feel good to be happy near Honor.

Mr. Chichester gave one of his old keen looks.

"Miss Elliott, you are not yourself this evening; some one has offended you. Come, what is it?"

But Dym would not answer; he was touching the sore place too roughly.

"She will go with you, Honor," he continued decisively, and the Squire's tone was very much what it would have been to a naughty child. "I think you are right, and Ingleside does not agree with her just now." Mr. Chichester had his own reasons for so quickly accepting Honor's offer; perhaps he noticed more than Mrs. Delaire

would quite have approved, but his cool peremptoriness only stirred up Dym's opposition.

"I cannot go—I do not wish to go," she answered with a little anger. Beatrix's words returned to her with full force: he said he must send her to Miss Nethecote's to learn manners. But if she declined to be so sent?

"Do my wishes go for nothing, then? I have very good reasons for wishing you to accept Miss Nethecote's kind invitation. What, Miss Elliott, you still hesitate?" in a tone of astonishment.

"Hush! do not press her; I will speak to her presently," whispered Honor, who saw that there was something more than met the ear in Dym's objection; but the Squire persisted.

"I expect to be answered, Honor. Miss Elliott must tell me truthfully what are her objections to complying with the favour I have just asked her. You heard me say just now that I wished this particularly, did you not?"

"Yes," was the sullen answer. Another time the blackness of his brow would have been dreadful to Dym, but now it only added fresh cause for aggravation.

"And you decline?"

"I do," returned Dym, stung by his manner into exasperation. "I was engaged to be Mrs. Chichester's companion, not Miss Nethecote's."

"Oh, my child!" Honor said no more as she moved away with a grieved face, but it was well Dym did not see the look on Mr. Chichester's as he followed her without a word.

"What is it all about?—why are you angering

the Squire?" exclaimed Humphrey. He had come up for another dance, and had heard the last few sentences.

Et tu, Brute!

"Oh, don't talk to me! Why are you all against me? I wish I had never come here!" cried poor angry Dym. She went out of the room in a little whirl of fury and despair, scattering rose-leaves as she went. Poor passionate Cinderella! The moonlight was shining on the terraces and garden-paths as she fled past the windows of the corridor; the evil fairy had come to the feast, and was poisoning her pleasure. When Dym was a child she used to huddle herself into a small heap on the floor, and scream out her passion. How she longed to do it now! She fetched a shawl and curled herself up in a dark corner in the snuggery, sobbing and crying, much as though she were a child again. He had made her contemptible in Honor's eyes; she had insulted her goodness and spoken rudely to her. Mr. Chichester should be her friend no longer: she hated him; he was as cold and cruel as Beatrix herself; she had better go away, for she would be happy here no longer. One knows how the changes ring on in the gamut of passion: a little anger, a brief spasm of envy or jealousy, will blot out a whole fair prospect. Dym hardly credited how much jealousy was at the bottom of this crazy mood of hers; she thought she hated her benefactor when she was simply ill-using him and herself too; she was testing the fidelity of that magnificent truth, "And to be wroth with

one that we love does work like madness in the brain."

Dym's madness was short-lived, but it was none the less to be rued. She had sowed too many thorns in her pillow to sleep well that night. She had no idea that Honor had been sitting on the edge of her little bed, patiently for an hour waiting for her; when she did not come, she stole out of the room and went back to Guy; you may be sure she lingered long after the other dancers had left, with a brief prayer that Dym's wilfulness might be forgiven; but for once the Squire was inexorable.

"Of course she must apologize to you," was his sole answer. "Until then I can look over nothing."

Dym hardly knew what was in store for her when she received her summons to the library the next morning. She was rather heavy-eyed and subdued; a little hard and rebellious, perhaps, but still to be conquered by a few kind words. Will could have brought her round to tears of penitence in a moment; but Will's way was not Mr. Chichester's.

He was deeply hurt and offended, and Miss Elliott must know it.

Dym's face grew sullen again when she saw the rigid lines of the mouth, and heard the cold displeased tone.

"You have sent for me, sir," using the forbidden word. It certainly did not help to clear Mr. Chichester's brow, as he placed a chair for

her, and took up his old position against the mantelpiece.

"Yes, I have sent for you. Though you are my mother's companion, Miss Elliott, I must remind you again that I am master in this house, and that I do not choose my friends to be insulted."

Dym's mouth closed rebelliously.

"I will waive your behaviour to my cousin," he went on. "Perhaps there may be faults on both sides; but let me tell you that nothing—nothing," speaking still more decisively, "can justify your constant rudeness to her. Last night I could not help wondering what your brother would have said to you."

"I will not have you speak to me of Will," returned Dym, her cheeks flaming again.

Mr. Chichester bowed his head, but his tone increased in severity.

"You compel me to tell you that you are wronging him and your better nature too, when you behave so. Your conduct last night to Miss Nethecote was foolish and ungrateful in the extreme. I would use a harsher word, but your conscience will apply it. I confess I am greatly disappointed in you, Miss Elliott."

It was hard; but she deserved it.

"Let me go," exclaimed Dym, in an agitated voice; "I cannot bear this."

"Pardon me, but you must bear to be told of your faults," he returned, coldly.

"No, no," she repeated, still more wildly. "I disappoint every one. I am not meant to

be good; I have a temper, and every one provokes it. You are all so harsh and stern, Mr. Chichester; let me go home. I cannot stay here any longer."

"That is sheer nonsense, Miss Elliott."

"I tell you I will go;" still more sullenly.

"This is worse than foolish," he replied, severely. "It is childish and undignified; neither my mother nor I will receive your resignation in this spirit. We will not allow you to quit us for such a cause."

"How can you help it, Mr. Chichester?"

Dym was almost beside herself. A ghost of a smile flitted across Mr. Chichester's stern face at her childishness, and then he braced himself up to fresh severity.

"You are wasting my time and your own; I cannot keep my guests waiting. I have sent for you this morning to give you an opportunity of making some apology; but I see I am mistaken."

"May I go then, sir?" Certainly Dym knew how to be provoking.

"You may go when I have finished what I have to say," he returned in his haughtiest manner. "I am sorry you oblige me to speak so peremptorily. Your apology to me is of small moment; but I request—nay, I insist that you make one without delay to Miss Nethecote."

Dym rose without a word.

"Do you understand me, Miss Elliott?"

"I understand you well, Mr. Chichester;" turning very pale, and speaking as proudly as he.

"And you mean to comply with my wish?"

"If not—you have my resignation;" spoken with a little scorn.

"What folly! what madness!" he muttered, walking to the window; "the girl must be crazy. Miss Elliott," turning to her with a heavy frown on his face, "I think we have talked long enough. When I hear you have made amends to Miss Nethecote, we will think about your leaving us."

CHAPTER V.

UNDER THE STARS.

OBWEBS again! A few poor pitiful meshes.

Half-truths magnified; a little leak widening into a dangerous breach; a few hasty words uttered at random, to be wiped out by bitter tears.

After all, how often are we like the Midianites!—a few broken pitchers, a slight confusion of lights, a sudden terror in the host, and we turn our hands against each other. We war with our best friends; we fall upon swords stretched out in our defence.

There is a wonderful axiom in philosophy—God help us if it be true!—that sound never dies; that a word once spoken goes echoing on through space for ever. Think of that vast inconceivable torrent of sound rolling up among the stars; think of the horrible blasphemies of earth, the foul words, the foolish utterances, that add volume to that dread accusation: an eternity of sound never to be silenced till time shall be no more!

When the books are opened—what if for the space of half an hour there shall again be silence

in heaven?—and that pitiful wave of sound reverberate to the everlasting doors, shall we not be judged beforehand who speak so leniently of the sins of the tongue, who laugh lightly over words that will make the angels veil their faces?

"Let your words be few," says the wise man.

"Speak much and often," is the counsel of fools.

"Little by little, by degrees," is the devil's motto. The father of lies is a wary diplomatist. If we fell too quickly, we should rise too humbly; no one slips the whole way downhill. We first lay plenty of those paving-stones which we are told line the nether world; we are full of good intentions; we are a little too long in groping our way upward, perhaps; there is dust that blinds us; stumbling-blocks, rough stones, that trip us up. Sometimes we fall prone; at other times we gather fresh strength and rise; now and then we cast our staff away. Ah, well for us that in the wilderness God's providence and our good angel do not desert us, for there are many whose beginnings of evil were small, whose end is a lost eternity.

"Let not the sun go down on your wrath." I wonder how many of us appreciate the wisdom, the intense common sense, to speak with all reverence of those words. "To strike when the iron is hot," is homely parlance, but it conveys the same truth.

We should never sleep on our anger. It is as though we called an evil spirit to our couch, and bade it watch beside us.

There is no hatred so intense as the hatred begotten of love.

There is no wrath so cruel as that we cherish against a beloved object.

As religious wars have been the bloodiest ever known in this world's history, so is our antagonism the strongest when a friend has provoked it. The cruellest passion of which human nature is capable is jealousy; and jealousy is begotten of love.

Dym had entered Guy Chichester's presence subdued and saddened, conscious of her fault, but not willing to own it; but she left it feeling as cold and hard as a stone. She was waiting for her olive-branch to come to her, without sending out the messenger for it. Ah, when our flood-tides are ebbing, how few of us ever stretch out our hands and pull "the dove into the ark!"

If it comes to us, well and good; but Pride—the foremost of the rank and file of the "Devil's Own"—forbids us to make the first advances. In her present mood, which was Esau-like, Dym would have died rather than ask Honor's pardon.

"Let him turn me away as he wanted to turn Stewart," she said to herself with a bitter laugh.

As she sat among the guests that evening, people wondered what had come to Miss Elliott. In lieu of her former dreamy silence and timid shrinking she talked, and talked well; her dark eyes shone with strange fitful light; a sort of fever burned in her veins, and gave colour to her olive skin; the pale, pretty-looking girl had warmed almost into beauty. Mr. Lintot for the

first time entered into conversation with her. Humphrey, who was present, stood beside them perfectly silent; he could not understand this new phase. Dym talked feverishly; but there was method in her madness. She grew argumentative, sparkling, witty; some of her racy sayings provoked peals of laughter, and reached Guy himself. As though the dark, moody figure added zest to her mirth, she redoubled her efforts.

An hour afterwards Mrs. Chichester found the girl sitting wan and exhausted on her little bed, with all the light gone out of her face; but she made an effort of gaiety when she saw her friend.

"Ah, you are coming to scold me. Did you think I wanted a cap and bells to-night, Mrs. Chichester?" with a miserable little laugh.

"My dear, that will do. We have had enough of this folly."

"If you knew how tired I was of being sensible, and Mr. Lintot was so amusing," pleaded Dym.

"Do you think I have come at this time of night to talk to you about Mr. Lintot?"

"No; oh, no;" then hypocritically, "but I must confess I was rather too bad this evening."

Mrs. Chichester sighed at the flippant tone; and then she took Dym's hot hand and stroked it gently.

"My dear, you are tired and feverish. Perhaps we had better talk to-morrow."

"As you please;" then affecting to yawn, "you must be very tired too, Mrs. Chichester."

"I think I should sleep better if you would let me speak to you now," went on her friend gently. "My dear, what I have heard to-day has distressed me greatly."

A restless tapping of Dym's foot against the floor; the tired face was beginning to grow sullen again. She was still in her white dress; but her braids of hair had been loosened, and fell over her shoulders in dark, shining masses. As she sat there curled up on the foot of the bed, she looked such a child that Mrs. Chichester could almost have taken her in her arms and kissed the wilfulness away; but no child's naughtiness shone in Dym's heavy eyes.

"My dear, I thought you loved me."

"Do I not, Mrs. Chichester?" But the tone was cold.

"If you loved me, would you think of leaving me, when you know," her voice sinking in spite of herself, "how helpless I am likely to become?"

Dym pushed back the hair from her temples with a movement of irritation. "You need not have reminded me of that, when you know I must go."

"Has Guy told you so?"

Dym was silent, and then her honesty was too much for her.

"No, Mrs. Chichester; I am sending myself away. It is no use trying to be good, and so I have given it up."

"But why must you go, my child?"

"Because I cannot stop here. Oh, why do you question me so? I cannot be good, like

you and Miss Nethecote, and so I had better go. I never meant to leave you, Mrs. Chichester;" her bosom heaving in spite of herself. "You have always been so kind to me, and I love you so; but there are many that will serve you better, and not trouble you as I should do if I stayed."

"I will risk it," was the gentle answer. "My child, I cannot have you leave me in this way."

"I have brought it on myself," in a low voice; "his conditions are too hard. I will not ask Miss Nethecote's pardon."

"My dear Miss Elliott, not if you be in the wrong?"

"Not when he bids me do it in that manner. I have been wronged too, cruelly wronged. I will not stay here to be treated and laughed at as though I were a child!"

"Hush, hush!"

"No, no, I will not hush. Do you know how hard he has been to me? I was wrong; but I have not deserved such angry looks and words. He looked as though he would almost have crushed me. I felt then as though I hated him."

"You hated Guy?"

"It was too bad to hate my benefactor, was it not? Of course it was all my temper. Oh, Mrs. Chichester, you are disappointed in me too."

"Poor child, you sorely grieve me."

"I grieve every one," returned Dym sadly. "When I go home to Will, he will be ready to

give me up too. Do you know what I was thinking about when you came upstairs, Mrs. Chichester?"

Mrs. Chichester shook her head.

"I was thinking of a fairy story Mr. Chichester once told Edith, about a fair, beautiful woman, who had a millstone given her instead of a heart, and who was beloved by a great prince."

"My dear, the darkness is making you fanciful."

"She was the delight of his eyes because she was so beautiful; but her stoniness and want of love chilled him in time. It is a long story; but I know she found her own heart again too late."

"That is true of many women, I fear."

"The end is too dreadful. She went mad, for he loved some one else; and she went through the streets crying, 'Oh, my heart, my heart!' and some good fairy in pity gave her back the millstone again, and changed her into a statue."

"Very pretty; but we are wandering from the subject, my child."

"No," replied Dym, pressing her two hands on her heart; "sometimes I think it is true of me. I love people so, and then I get angry, and feel as though I were changed into stone. If I could feel sorry I would; but nothing you say seems to touch me."

Mrs. Chichester rose sadly. "Then we will talk of this again. My son was right when he said I had better not come to you to-night."

"Did he say that, Mrs. Chichester? If I am so wicked, why do you kiss me?"

"I suppose because I love you," was the quiet answer; and touched to the heart, in spite of herself, Dym threw her arms round her friend's neck.

After that night Dym relapsed into her subdued silent state again; now and then her better feelings were touched, and she almost brought herself to the point of seeking Honor; but a sarcasm from Beatrix, or more marked coldness on the Squire's part, silenced the good intentions and hardened her in her obstinacy. Beatrix did not openly torment her, but she made no secret of her triumph at the state of things. To her sharp eye the Squire's displeasure was evident enough. Mr. Chichester treated his *protégée* with courtesy in his guests' presence, but he never voluntarily addressed her; and the chill politeness of his answers prevented Dym from taking the initiative. Mrs. Chichester too, probably at her son's suggestion, took very little notice of her, unless they were alone, and then she would resume her gentle persuasions.

How Dym endured her miserable position and maintained her sullenness was evidence of the mingled strength and pride of her nature. Once, when she was very wretched, Humphrey came up to her, and in a low voice begged her to come and see Honor.

"She will be right glad to see you, and it is so long since you have been at Nidderdale Cottage," he said persuasively; but Humphrey's homely eloquence was not to prevail.

"I have not been in the mood to take lessons

in politeness," returned Dym, in a sarcastic tone. Humphrey merely stared, but Mr. Chichester, who was passing at that moment, heard it.

The next morning a note, in the Squire's handwriting, was laid on Miss Elliott's table.

"I do not think a second conversation will be productive of any good," it began, "and so I am writing to you, and I must beg the favour of your replying in the same way.

"If I were disappointed in you a week ago, Miss Elliott, you may guess what my feelings are now. I know what temper is, God forgive me; but a mind that will not own itself in the wrong, that will persist in that wrong day after day, must be a small one indeed.

"I begin to see you are right in thinking we must part; under the present state of things Ingleside must be a most undesirable residence for you. My mother and I are willing to accept your resignation, if after these ten days' cool consideration you still persist in it. I am grieved my mother's kindness should be so wounded, and I feel very deeply for your brother.

"Perhaps you will remember him, and choose another course before it is too late.

"If so, my sole condition is, that before four-and-twenty hours are over you make peace with Miss Nethecote, and perhaps, in that case, I may still be able to subscribe myself

"Your true friend,

"GUY LATIMER CHICHESTER."

When Dym had read to the end of the note she gave a great sob of pain, and tore it into little pieces; and a moment afterwards placed herself at her writing-table, and wrote a brief answer, again tendering her resignation.

Poor Dym, she thought it was cool; but there was despair in every line. "Since you have ceased to trust me, and are so bitterly disappointed in me, I had better go," she wrote; "I have not been worthy of your estimation, and I deserve to lose it. I will write to my brother, and beg him to find me a situation nearer home. I must leave you to fix the time for me to quit you, but I can wait (if you wish it) till Mrs. Chichester has suited herself with another companion. For my own comfort, I cannot leave Ingleside too soon."

A great splash of tear-blots blotted the last words, and she was obliged to re-write them. As she did so, a curious resolution came into her mind.

She was contemptible in Mr. Chichester's eyes because, in her false pride, she had refused to atone for her fault. Well, she would atone for it, before twenty-four hours were over; she would humble herself before Honor; but she would go all the same.

"How can I live on here and know he despises me?" she said, choking down another bitter sob. That was the secret of her despair—she had lost caste in Guy Chichester's fastidious eyes, she had wounded his notions of honour; he no longer thought the same of her.

The bad humour was oozing rapidly away when Dym could write that she was not worthy of Guy Chichester's goodness. When she had finished her letter, she dried her eyes, and hastily removing all marks of agitation, carried it herself to the library.

She thought herself safe from observation, as no one invaded the Squire's sanctum in his absence. She was greatly startled, then, when her low tap was answered by a faint "Come in."

It was too late to retreat, so Dym pushed open the door with a hand that would tremble in spite of her assumed boldness, and found herself where she least wished to be—in the Squire's presence.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Chichester; I thought you were out shooting, or I would not have disturbed you;" and then she stood irresolute.

Mr. Chichester was sitting, or rather lying, back in his velvet lounging chair, with his hands over his head, pressing his temples tightly.

"Do you want me?" he said, not rising as usual.

Dym had seen that drawn white look on his face before. In a moment she had forgotten the estrangement, her letter, and everything, as she sprang to his side.

"You have one of your headaches, Mr. Chichester," she said, in the sweet unsteady voice he had heard once before; "can I do nothing to relieve you?"

"No, thank you," he replied, looking up at

her with heavy lack-lustre eyes, and an expression of suffering passed over his face; "this is not going to be one of my bad headaches. I have been fighting it off these three hours, and the worst is over."

"But you are still in pain; do let me try the cold fomentation again," persisted Dym. But he turned his face away restlessly.

"No, thank you, Miss Elliott."

"At least let me steep this handkerchief in eau-de-Cologne; you are so hot, it will refresh you."

But he shook his head, and a moment afterwards closed his eyes, as though her pertinacity annoyed him.

Poor Dym, for a moment she stood looking at him as though her heart would burst. He had said he would always think of his nurse gratefully, and now he would accept nothing at her hand, though she knew with womanly instinct how that burning head and forehead craved the cool laving and fragrant waters. He had said he should always think of her when he had a headache, and now he would not suffer her to touch him. Dym turned away with an odd choking in her throat, but she could not leave him like this. The winter's sun was shining into the room; she softly lowered the blind, and interposed a screen between him and the fire, taking care to replenish it noiselessly. Then she fetched Mrs. Chichester's vinaigrette and eau-de-Cologne, and laid them beside him.

"Thank you, that will do," he said, with a

slight frown Dym knew so well; evidently her persistence displeased him. "You have brought a letter for me, have you not?"

"It will do to-morrow," she replied hurriedly; but he held out his hand, and she was obliged to give it. She had no excuse for lingering now, but before she reached the door he recalled her.

"Miss Elliott, is this your final answer?"

Dym bowed; words at that moment were impossible. Oh, if she had never written that letter! But it was too late now. She must abide by her decision.

"Very well," he returned, closing his eyes again; and Dym felt herself dismissed.

Every one noticed how ill Miss Elliott looked at luncheon that day. She had some work to do for Mrs. Chichester that afternoon, and it was nearly dusk when she had finished it. When she had laid it aside she pencilled a few words on a slip of paper and gave it to Edith, begging her to deliver it to Mrs. Chichester when she returned from her drive.

"Dear Mrs. Chichester, I have gone down to Nidderdale Cottage. Please excuse me from the drawing-room this evening," was all it said, only Edith, by some mistake, gave it into the Squire's hand instead.

Dym put on her little grey cloak, and went out into the cold wintry air. Kelpie wanted to follow her, but she bade him go back.

The firelight burnt brightly in the cottage windows as she passed; a soft grey mist, threatening rain or snow, brooded over the silent fields;

there was a sluggish dampness creeping up from the grass, and the narrow field-path was slippery with oozing red clay. The wind had fallen, but the cold was intense. Dym hardly felt it as she plodded wearily on. There was the stile where patient Humphrey had so often awaited her. How long ago it seemed since those November days when she and Mrs. Chichester were alone at Ingleside, and Humphrey and she had taken those twilight walks! She had thought those days very dull and heavy, but how happy they seemed by comparison now!

As though chiming in with her thoughts Mr. Nethecote overtook her just as she reached the door of Nidderdale Cottage; he came up panting and out of breath.

"Miss Elliott, this is a sight for sore eyes; who would have thought of seeing you down here on such an evening?"

"It is very cold," returned Dym, shivering; the grey humidity all at once seemed to oppress her.

"It means mischief," observed Humphrey sententiously. "We shall have sleet or snow or both before long. You must make up your mind to stay here till morning, Miss Elliott. I only hope the Duchess will not be benighted."

"Is not Miss Nethecote at home?" faltered Dym. What if after all she were unable to accomplish her errand? But Humphrey's next words relieved her.

"Oh, she is only over at Grace Dunster's. That girl of theirs—crazy Deb as they call her—

has been taken with fits again. Phil came over crying early in the morning. The Duchess has been there all day."

"And when do you think she will be home?" interrupted Dym breathlessly; but Humphrey could not tell.

"If she does not come in another hour she will not be able to come at all," was all the scanty comfort he could give; "for the fields will be impassable, and, for the matter of that, the road too; maybe after all she'll stop the whole night with Grace. They say another seizure will finish Deb."

"Then I shall go back," was the prompt decision. "Thank you, Mr. Nethecote," as Humphrey took up his straw hat again, "but I would rather—much rather—go alone, please."

"Nay, nay, I'll see you safely through the fields; but you had better stay, Miss Elliott. After all, the Duchess may be back, and our old housekeeper will take care of you. Now I think of it, Honor has an appointment quite early tomorrow morning, so she will be sure to send me word if she cannot come. Anyhow, come in and warm yourself, and have a cup of tea." But Dym was not to be persuaded.

"I would rather get back to the village before a snowstorm comes on."

"Oh, you will do that over and over again; besides, I'm fairly seasoned, and am safe not to lose my way."

Dym almost stamped her little foot in her impatience—in her present soreness she could

not tolerate Humphrey's lumbering old-fashioned courtesy.

"When I say a thing I mean it, Mr. Nethecote. I have my own reasons. I am very unhappy, and should be bad company. I would rather walk back alone;" and Dym's tone was such that Mr. Nethecote, gentleman as he was, could not persist.

"Nay, nay, if you will be so wilful," he said, with his kind smile, "well, hasten back, and go by the road." But even here Dym would have her way.

"It is twice as long, and I am so tired," she returned pettishly, but her heart misgave her as she saw Humphrey's slouching figure disappear; he was too good-natured to take offence at her abruptness, but there was a disappointed hurt look in his eyes as he turned to leave her. "Make all the haste you can, and take care how you climb the stone fences," he had said, "you may miss the stepping-stones in the dark;" and Dym had answered absently and sped on her way.

She was quite at home in the dark fields, and rather scorned the idea of missing her way; her only bugbear, Squire Trevor's cattle, were safely foddered for the night. But now, all at once, some chill presentiment made her regret Humphrey almost before she had taken a dozen steps; she little thought the faithful fellow fully meant to follow her, only Dr. Grey had stepped up to the cottage and detained him.

Dym scolded herself for the feeling vigorously. "I did not sleep well last night, and I suppose

that makes me nervous," she said, "and these grey low skies seem to crush one. Hark! what is that," as some snorting sound was plainly audible near her. It was not very easy to discern anything plainly in that uncertain light, but before she had gone many yards farther a pair of dark eyes and two formidable horns were clearly visible.

Dym was London-bred, and she had never been able to overcome her fear of horned oxen. In the daylight the clumsy gambols of a playful cow would sometimes make her heart beat faster; she had heard terrible stories of Squire Trevor's black bull Cerberus. Not long ago he had nearly gored a boy to death, and since then he had never been permitted to be at large, though, as he was of very fine breed, Mr. Trevor had not condemned him to death. Could Cerberus have broken bounds and be wandering over the wintry fields? Dym caught sight of a fragment of rope, and at the same moment a loud defiant bellow warned her of her enemy's approach. If Dym's life had depended upon it, she could not have suppressed the scream that rose to her lips as she turned round and made for the low stone wall which in Yorkshire replaces our southern hedges. The slippery paths were impediment enough, but fear literally winged her feet; the darkness and her own terror magnified everything. In her imagination she could hear the hoofs behind her, and the warm breath of the infuriated bull. "You will miss the stepping-stones in the darkness. Be careful how you

climb the stone fences," Humphrey had said to her, as though Dym were likely to take heed to her footsteps in that crazy terror of hers.

The stone wall was reached, and Dym was clambering over it with feet and hands, when something soft certainly touched her foot, and with another cry she threw herself forward, dislodging the topmost stones in her haste, and one perilously loose rolled down, and in another moment Dym was lying under it in the wet clay, with her ankle either dislocated or broken. The blow was a cruel one, but Dym's first feeling was one of relief—the wall was between her and Cerberus; she would hardly have clasped her hands in that mute thankfulness if she had not known that Cerberus was quietly cropping the grass on the other side. He was seeking his way to his warm shed when Dym crossed his path, and he had trotted after her with the most amicable intentions. Nothing but the goad or a red waistcoat ever irritated Cerberus, and the boy in question had deliberately infuriated him before Cerberus quietly pitched him over the hedge.

Dym listened to the crisp munching on the other side of the wall for some time before she attempted to rise. She must go back to Nidderdale Cottage, she thought, with a little shame of what Humphrey would say. If she had only followed his counsel, and gone back by the road, this accident would never have happened. How her ankle hurt her! She must have wrenched it in her haste, or some stone had struck her, she hardly knew which. She raised herself cautiously,

but the intense agony of the effort extorted a groan, and then she felt a coldness come over her face, and knew she was fainting.

When she came to herself again she lay and deliberated what she could do; the pain and faintness made her feel unlike herself; she argued as though some one else was lying in her place. "There comes the sleet. Oh, how icy cold it is, and how numb my hands are getting! No one will come over these fields to-night, and if I lie here till morning I shall catch my death of cold or die, and then nobody will know how sorry I am; and I am not fit to die," thought the poor child. "It is only half a mile to Nidderdale Cottage," she continued. "My ankle feels as though it were broken, but perhaps I might make shift to do it on my hands and knees, only I could never climb the next wall. If I managed to crawl that distance, there would only be one more field between me and the road, and I could call out, and perhaps a passer-by might hear me. They will all be so frightened at the Great House if I am here all night;" and as though this thought gave her courage, Dym made another heroic effort, but a fresh access of torture brought on the faintness again. She only managed to free herself from the stone, and prop herself up against the wall. The bodily anguish she endured deadened her in a great measure to the cold; only the driving sleet made her giddy, and she covered her face with her cloak and closed her eyes.

"If I am to die, I suppose I had better say

my prayers," thought Dym. Her clothes were getting drenched and stiffened on her, and the pain was making her light-headed. All at once it came upon her how Will had once lain under a wall while the lightning played round him, and how they had taken him up for dead.

"I wonder who will be the first to find me?" moaned Dym. "What do they say when things like this happen? 'Died by the visitation of God;' but Humphrey will tell them it was all my wilfulness."

"How disappointed he looked, dear old fellow!" she went on presently. "Why did I not let him come with me? I do everything wrong now, and nobody cares, not even the good God, or He would stop this dreadful sleet, and let one star—one little star—shine out on me. Oh, this terrible darkness and silence! and how my brain is burning! I wonder what they are doing up at Ingleside;" and then all at once there came on the unhappy girl a sick longing for a voice, the touch of a hand, the warmth of a fireside. "How warm and cosy it must be in my little room at home! Oh, if some one would carry me to my own little bed! What would Will say if he knew I was lying out on the ground this cold dark night?"

"*Qui patitur vincit.* Who said that? Will, Will; but this pain is so dreadful, and I am so young to be dying out here all alone. If he knew, I am sure he would forgive me. O good God, I cannot bear this agony any longer."

Dym must have fainted again in the despairing attempt to raise herself, for when her consciousness returned the sleet had ceased, and a chill night wind swept over the lonely fields; and, as though in answer to her childish prayer, two or three stars gemmed the blackness of the sky.

Dym forgot her stiffened limbs as the friendly light greeted her eyes. "'As one star differeth from another star in glory.' I remember Will preached on that once. Perhaps after all there is mercy in letting me die like this, for if I grew old I might miss my way at the end; it is so hard trying to be good. What would Will say if he knew I were dying and had not said my prayers? 'Lighten our darkness—' that is the prayer that will suit me best now; that and the Lord's Prayer, if I am not too weary to say it."

Dym interlaced her numb fingers; but the words would not let themselves be said. Fragments of chants, scraps of hymns mingled with the several clauses. "Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom; lead thou me on. The night is dark; oh, so dark," moaned Dym, "and I am far from home, far from home. Oh, Mrs. Chichester, I never hated him—never, never; only Beatrix put a millstone in place of my heart."

A little grey face lay against the stony wall; the numb hands were folded piteously under the warm cloak; then all at once it quivered into life; something warm and bushy sprang upon

her; two little paws scratched at her; something licked her face lovingly, and whined.

Dym gave a hoarse hysterical cry. "O Kiddle-a-wink, dear little Kiddle-a-wink!" and a moment after she was lying in Honor's arms.

CHAPTER VI.

DRAWN OUT OF MANY WATERS.

HONOR gave a soft inarticulate cry, as a mother-bird who sees her nestling lie with broken wing on the ground. She bent over the little figure with infinite pity and yearning.

"Miss Elliott! Dym! Merciful Heavens; poor child, poor child!" The rigid unnatural posture; the marble hands clenched, yet drooping; the grey face bowed down upon the breast,—no wonder if for the moment Honor shuddered, as though out in the winter's night she had met death face to face, till the dog's whining caresses stirred the recumbent form into life.

Dym felt after speech as a drowning man seeks for breath; but her voice sounded from afar—weak, broken, almost lost.

"God sent His angel—don't touch me, Honor. Oh, my foot, my foot!" she moaned.

"Have you hurt it, love? Tell me what has happened. Brave little Kiddle-a-wink, you have found her for me when I might have passed her in the darkness; there, let me hold you, so." There was a closing of soft fur around her, as though Honor were wrapping her up in her own

mantle. Honor's arms propped her now instead of the stony walls; Honor's warm vigorous hands strove to bring warmth to the frozen fingers. Now she held them to her lips, and now hid them in her bosom.

"I could not pray; but He has sent you, Honor." She felt easy now, lying with her head on Honor's lap. The pallid lips were kissed into speech; endurance of pain was possible when the horror of darkness and silence was folded away.

"How did it happen?" repeated Honor in her soft monotone, half wondering, half to herself.

"It was Cerberus; he frightened me. I fell in climbing the wall, and a stone rolled down and crushed me," panted Dym, in short separate sentences. "It was my fault; all my fault."

"Hush, don't think of that now. How long have you been lying here? Poor child, as though she could tell me that!" interrupted Honor, catching herself up.

"What time is it?" replied Dym faintly. "If I knew that, I could tell you."

Honor looked up at the stars. "It must be near midnight," she said reflectively.

Dym shuddered. "I heard the bells chime six as I passed the village. I have been lying here five hours; five long hours. Honor, what are you doing?" as Miss Nethecote raised the head gently from her lap.

"You will be brave, darling; you will not mind staying here a little while alone. I will leave Kiddle-a-wink." But Dym clung to her with a sobbing cry.

"No, no!"

"I must fetch Humphrey, Sweet; you will die if you lie here any longer. In a few minutes, only a few minutes, I will be back with wine and warm wrappers, and Humphrey shall carry you home." But Honor's cheerfulness faltered a little as the numb fingers closed round her neck.

"No, no; you must not go."

"Dym, for your brother's sake. A winter's night in these fields, and you will be a cripple for life. For God's sake let me fetch Humphrey."

"O Honor, stay with me; if you leave me in this darkness and silence, I shall die. I am not cold now, not very. If you would only lay me down again, I feel I could sleep."

She slid down from Honor's arms as she spoke. Torpor was creeping over her and making her voice drowsy.

The tears rolled down Miss Nethecote's face; a sort of despair seized her. "Dear Lord, help us!" she whispered. "How can I leave her? But we shall both die." She had drawn off her furred mantle and wrapped Dym in it, and already premonitory shivers shook her from head to foot; her grand woman's frame felt suffering acutely. She shrank from it with a healthy loathing of pain.

"If I knew what to do; if I dared go in spite of her entreaties!" and then a sudden idea struck her. She called Kiddle-a-wink, and tying her white handkerchief round the dog's neck, took a little chain and locket from her bosom, and carefully twisted it in and out through the white

folds. On the locket was the Chichester motto, *Qui patitur vincit,* and inside was a brown curly lock, evidently severed from a man's head. Then she clapped her hands. "Kiddle-a-wink, find Guy!" she cried; and the sagacious little animal, giving one short, delighted bark, set off through the dark fields in the direction of Ingleside.

Honor had two good reasons for sending her forlorn hope to Ingleside. Humphrey in all probability would have given her up, and have gone to bed; and as he was a sound sleeper, Kiddle-a-wink's scratchings and whinings would never have woke him. At Ingleside they kept later hours. The Squire was much given to prowling about the grounds late at night; and if he were within, Honor knew Kiddle-a-wink well enough to be sure he would rouse him by his dismal howlings on the terrace.

As it happened, Mr. Chichester was just calling in Kelpie from a midnight hunt after cats, when he felt himself gently pulled by the lappels of his coat, and in another moment Kiddle-a-wink was capering and fussing about his feet, and whining delightedly.

Guy had a soft spot in his heart for all dumb creatures, and he stooped down and patted the Skye terrier kindly.

"Why Kiddle-a-wink, old fellow, how do you come here at this hour of the night? and what have you done with your mistress? Down, Kelpie boy, don't be jealous. Halloo, what's this?" as Kiddle-a-wink's unusual necklace attracted his observation. The little dog sat up and begged,

as Guy examined the handkerchief and chain narrowly. He turned pale as he did so, and strong man as he was, his hand shook. There was the H.N. in Honor's beautiful embroidery, and the locket which years ago he had once hung round her white neck. *Qui patitur vincit.* "That must be my motto as well as yours, Guy," she had whispered softly. "It will always be yours, Honor bright," had been his lover-like answer.

"She is in trouble; she wants me. O Kiddle-a-wink, my brave dog, what does this mean?" And as though the dog's instinct understood the tone of anguish, the little animal gave another short bark, and ran forward.

"Follow him, Kelpie. Hie, good dog; seek seek!" And both dogs bounded forward, and the Squire followed.

Dym seemed sinking into sleep, when she started up with something of a scream.

"Are you there, Honor?"

"Yes, dear;" but Honor's voice was low and suffering.

"I thought it was a dream; but my foot woke me. O Honor, I came to-night to ask you to forgive me."

"You need not remember that now. Is the pain very bad, dear?"

"Yes, and I feel stiff and sore all over. Did you say I should be a cripple for life, Honor?"

"Nay, God forbid. I think He will send us some help soon. I hope so," she continued wearily.

"How faint your voice sounds! Honor, will

it hurt you too? I never thought of that; and you have wrapped me in your warm cloak, and are shivering. I cannot suffer it; you shall leave me—go!"

"Not now; we will wait a little longer. This wall shelters us from the wind."

"How good you are to me!" laying her cold lips against Honor's hand. "It is coals of fire; I don't deserve it. Are you sure you have forgiven me?"

"As I would be forgiven. Child, why do you talk so, when we are both out alone with Him?" And though Honor's teeth chattered, and she could not repress the cold shuddering that went through her, her pale face was lifted to the wintry sky with an expression of perfect peace. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him," were the words that rose to her lips.

But it was with a voice unsteady with joy that she cried, "Guy, Guy!" as a dark figure came striding towards them. "O Dym, wake! He has sent His angel," she said, with a sweet, tremulous laugh; and her hands were stretched out and grasped, as Guy had never dared to grasp them for years.

"Honor, my darling, what has happened?" Then recoiling as the dim figure on Honor's lap stirred at his voice—"Good God! another woman! Not Miss Elliott? Good heavens, and we thought she was with you!" gasped the Squire.

"She has hurt her foot, and has been lying here six mortal hours. Gently, touch her gently, Guy," as with an exclamation of pity he stooped and

lifted Dym in his arms; but as though pain were making her delirious, she clung to Honor.

"It is the Squire himself; it is Mr. Chichester. Let him take you, dear; he will not hurt you." But Dym still resisted.

"Tell him that you have forgiven me. Tell him it is all right between us, and that you have given your life for me," she cried hysterically.

Such a pitiful look came over Guy Chichester's face in the darkness; but he only said, "Hush, it is all right, my child," and lifted her up, wrapping the fur cloak carefully round her, as though she were an infant. Perhaps the meaning of Dym's words came to him as he felt the soft furs, for he groaned and said, "O Honor, my generous Honor!" as though some terrible fear smote him.

"Come," he cried impatiently, offering his hand; but even with that assistance Honor could scarcely move her cramped and frozen limbs. "Lean on my shoulder. dear; drag yourself along. I am strong enough for both," he kept saying. But with all her brave efforts, he had to lay Dym down again on the wet ground, and lift Honor over the fences, and in spite of his burning desire to get them home, Honor could only move stiffly and slowly, clinging to Guy's disengaged arm.

"This night will be the death of you both, my darling. Do try to walk faster," he implored, in an agitated voice; but Honor shook her head.

"I think you must leave me, Guy; I can do no more."

"Leave you? Never! We will all die first.

Courage, dear; lean on me more heavily. We shall come in sight of the cottage directly;" and Honor, as though compelled by that strong hand, dragged herself forward again a few paces.

"There is some one coming to meet us; hold up, Honor darling. I think it is Humphrey. Nethecote—Nethecote, I say!"

Guy's despairing halloo would almost have roused the dead.

"Coming, Squire, coming!" shouted back Humphrey; and in another moment Honor tottered—nay, almost fell into her brother's arms.

Humphrey had been unaccountably restless that night, and had wandered down the road as far as Woodside, when the Squire's voice had hailed him. The poor fellow was in a pitiable state of perplexity and alarm as the miserable little cavalcade came in sight.

"What's to do, Squire—what has happened?" he ejaculated.

"Enough has happened—don't talk, man; rouse the women servants and send down for Dr. Grey!" was the Squire's agitated answer. "Some of us will pay for this night's work, I expect;" and as soon as Humphrey's slow brains comprehended the exigences of the case, he brought all his common sense and shrewd masculine management to bear on it.

The drowsy maids were roused, fires lighted, beds warmed, and strong hot drinks brewed in haste. Dym's cry of anguish as they handled her foot brought up Guy himself to the door, to forbid its being touched till Dr. Grey could be

brought, and Humphrey was soon on his way to fetch him.

Honor, though faint and exhausted, would permit no one to attend to her till Dym was safely put in her warm bed; she was still in her damp garments, hanging over Dym's pillow, when Dr. Grey arrived.

"Miss Nethecote, this will never do," he said sternly; "you will have a worse touch of your old enemy, pleurisy, than you have had in your life if you do not instantly go to bed and take my remedies." And Honor, though reluctantly, was compelled to obey.

"I shall have two patients on my hands, but Miss Elliott will be the worse," was Dr. Grey's observation when he came downstairs. Humphrey, who was sitting by the fire with his hands over his eyes, shuddered and gave a low groan; the two other men exchanged glances—poor Humphrey's secret was not difficult to read.

"And the ankle?"

"Dislocated—not broken. Oh, we shall get that right presently; but she is in a good deal of pain."

Mr. Chichester walked towards the fireplace, and the doctor followed him.

"Grey, you don't say how Miss Nethecote is," he observed in a low voice.

"Oh, well, we shall see to-morrow; I am coming up early. Has Miss Elliott a mother or sister?"

"Neither."

"That is unfortunate. I am afraid we must

look forward to a long bout of nursing; she cannot have lain on the damp ground for all those hours without incurring terrible mischief."

"I am afraid not," was the grave response. "And Miss Nethecote?"

"I have left her pretty comfortable," was the evasive answer; and as though fearful of any further questioning, the doctor reiterated injunctions as to quiet and care, and hurriedly left the room.

"Squire, does he think she will die?" exclaimed Humphrey. The Yorkshireman's good-natured face looked almost haggard as he asked the question.

Mr. Chichester started. "For God's sake, man, whom do you mean?" he said irritably.

"Miss Elliott. Nay, nay," coming up to him and putting his hand on his shoulder soothingly, "you didn't think I meant our Honor, Squire? Why, the Duchess is doing finely; you heard him say so just now."

Mr. Chichester's face quivered all over, but he turned it aside quickly.

"I don't know, Humphrey," speaking in a voice half choked with emotion; "I am afraid this is a bad business. Fancy taking off her own cloak to cover that poor girl! I always said she was nearer an angel than a woman."

"Ay, ay," groaned Humphrey, "there is no one like our Honor."

"She was glad enough to see me to-night; I could see her stretching out her hands to me half a field off. I may win her yet—who knows, Humphrey?"

"God speed the day, Squire!"

"Poor old fellow, it is hard upon you too, to-night—there, I will not keep you any longer from Honor. Come down and tell me when she is asleep, and how that poor child fares. I am afraid I have been thinking more of Honor than her;" and Mr. Chichester sighed as he drew his chair to the fire and prepared for his long watch.

The squire was right in his dismal auguries. Before twenty-four hours were over, Dym was in the agonies of a sharp attack of rheumatic fever, and Honor, only divided from her by one thin wall, was wrestling fiercely with death. The cold had struck her, inflammation of the lungs set in, and neither doctor nor nurse knew how it would end, or if her strong vitality would gain the ascendency. "You have given your life for me," Dym had cried in her semi-delirium—she little knew how nearly her words had come true!

"If I die, promise me you will bring Guy to me, that I may bid him good-bye," she said one day to Humphrey; and another time she bade him bring the chain and locket, and hang it round her neck.

"You wont die, Duchess?" implored poor Humphrey, as his shaking hand fulfilled the injunction; the plain hard-featured face was growing more haggard day by day. As for the Squire, he looked heart-broken.

"I don't know, I think it would be best," she answered dreamily; "not for you, dear old Humphrey, perhaps," stroking his face, "but for him—and me," she added, after a minute.

"You would not say so if you saw him, Honor."

Honor's thin fingers caressed the locket lovingly.

"How does he look?" she whispered.

"Out of heart, as a man who had lost his guiding star—all astray and lost like."

"Tell him it is better so, there is perfect faith there—no, don't say that, perhaps it will sound like a reproach; be kind to him, Humphrey. If I live, who knows? No, I must not think of that;" and Honor turned her face wearily to the wall.

They thought she was sleeping, and feared to disturb her, when all the time the poor soul was making a gallant fight against depression.

"His will—teach me to say it," she whispered. "Am I ready to die, when one face comes between me and heaven—always, always? O Guy, not to know I love you as I do—Guy, my hero, my glorious Guy—my one and only love!" Here she wrung her hands and wept piteously, and fell to praying.

He had called her an angel, but she was only a woman—a poor weak woman, after all. Honor's faith was childlike, but the damps from the Valley of the Shadow of Death were tarnishing her shield; the intense vitality of her nature shuddered at the thoughts of decay.

"Life is sweet, after all. We never know how sweet till we fear to lose it," she said to Mr. Fortescue, who had come on his ministry of

consolation; "if it were not wrong, I should like you to pray that I may live a little longer."

"You must offer up this reluctance as a sacrifice," he returned gently. "We all pray that you may live, Miss Nethecote; but there is one in the next room to whom death would be a release."

He spoke of Dym, and indeed her sufferings were terrible; Nature was taking her revenge. The dislocated ankle was Dym's least trouble; the fever raged like molten fire in her veins; sometimes she grew delirious with it, every movement was torture; it was an aggravated form of the same illness that had crippled William Elliott for life.

Dym used to moan for her brother from morning to night. One day the Squire, who was prowling before the door as usual, overheard her.

Two days afterwards, as she woke up refreshed from sleep, she saw a face bending over her in the twilight.

"My dear Dym!"

"O Will, Will!" Two bandaged arms strove to reach him, but failed; the wan little face he scarcely knew turned itself wearily on the pillow. "It is such pain to move; come nearer, Will. Oh, is it really and truly you?"

"Yes, it is I, Dimples," came in the old quaint voice; but William Elliott had a huskiness in his throat as he spoke, and more than once he had to take off his spectacles and clear their mistiness.

"Put them away, I like you better without

them," pleaded Dym in her weak voice. "Mrs. Chichester, may I have a candle, please? I want to see how Will looks." But Mrs. Chichester had slipped out of the room, thinking the brother and sister would like to meet alone.

"I will stir the fire; there—there is a glorious blaze! Don't you want your drink now? I used always to wake thirsty."

William Elliott might have been used to nursing by the way he propped up his sister on her pillows, and administered the cooling drink; either he was skilful or Dym was better, for she felt little pain.

"How good it is to have you do things for me again, Will!" she whispered gratefully as he laid her down. Will's kiss said he was glad too. Dym was not capable of much speech, but she lay and feasted her eyes on him as though she had been hungering and thirsting for the sight for a long time. Mr. Elliott did not trust himself to say much either, but once he leant over her and blessed her hurriedly.

"My poor little child-sister, I have nearly lost you," he said tremulously.

Dym gave him one of her old sweet smiles.

"I am better now, am I not, Mrs. Chichester?" as her friend re-entered, fearful of any prolonged conversation.

"Much better; but the doctor says we must be quiet. Mr. Elliott, you must only look at her to-day; she is not allowed to talk."

"She is not much to look at," returned her brother fondly and sadly; "you have only white

Christmas roses in your cheeks, my poor Dimples!"

"Oh, I shall be better now you have come," replied Dym brightly; her youthful hopefulness was beginning to assert itself with the cessation of pain. Will's face was strength and life to her, she told Mrs. Chichester, as she came to give her her parting kiss before going to Ingleside.

Mrs. Chichester spent all her days at Nidderdale Cottage, but she always went home with her son to dinner. It was employment for the Squire's restlessness to go to and fro on all sorts of errands between the Cottage and the Great House; his most frequent excuse was Humphrey. "He wants some one to sit with him, poor old fellow," he said; but it must be doubted whether the Squire's influence was the most cheering for Humphrey. It was better when William Elliott came, and Mr. Chichester's reserve broke down, and he talked of his fears openly; and it was better for Humphrey too, who had now a sympathizing hearer on everything that related to Dym.

The guests were all gone from the Great House when William Elliott took up his quarters there. The day after the accident Guy had called his cousin to him.

"Trichy," he said, putting his hands on her shoulders, "I want you to do me a favour."

"What is it, Guy?" she returned, looking up wistfully at his sad face.

"Get all these people away. I am in trouble,

dear; I cannot play the host any longer when the light of my eyes is being taken from me;" and Beatrix, who read the truth in the haggard sleepless eyes, could not refuse to do him this kindness. And when they were all gone he sat down wearily in his old place, and his mother came to him and put her arm round his neck.

"Guy, do not give way so; while there is life there is hope," she whispered; and so in his hour of weakness she comforted him.

Mrs. Chichester had liked William Elliott for her son's sake, but she very soon grew to love him for his own. His was a nature formed for sympathy; out of suffering he had learnt to pity; out of endurance he had grown wise.

The peculiar pride and reticence of Guy Chichester's character had broken down under this sudden shock; he no longer resisted the hand that probed the sore places so gently and firmly; the old wounds had yawned afresh; now was the time for the pouring in of the oil and wine.

Night after night the two men sat together, and in those long hours of unrestrained intercourse William Elliott learnt new phases of the generous eccentric nature that, self-directed and self-sustained, had wandered at times from the right way, and whose substance and youth had been wasted on one object. The friendship ripened daily. Mrs. Chichester rejoiced that her son's fastidious taste was suited with such an admirable companion; in spite of his many infirmities William Elliott had charming man-

ners; when he found himself in congenial society, he was apt to relax from his gravity, and indulge in that sweet playfulness that seemed natural to him.

Mrs. Chichester used to watch them as they paced the terrace together. What a strange pair they looked! William Elliott, with his spare bowed form, irresistibly reminding one of "the woman who was bound by Satan for so many years," and "was in no ways able to lift herself"—for there was always something painful at first sight in the clergyman's deformed figure—and Guy's herculean proportions and the grand face with its short tawny beard.

Mrs. Chichester often talked to Mr. Elliott about his sister. Will heard that Dym had borne her prolonged sufferings most heroically; she used to cry quietly to herself sometimes, but she seldom complained; when she was at her worst it was only "Will! Will!" The doctor and nurse told the same tale.

"If she were my own daughter, I could hardly have grown to love her more," Mrs. Chichester assured him with tears in her eyes. It spoke well for Dym's real sweetness at the bottom, that in spite of her wilfulness she had made so true a friend.

Dym's painful nights were endurable now, when she had Will's visits to look forward to in the morning; he always stopped with her an hour or two.

Dym had taken a decided turn for the better now. From the day when she woke to find

Will's face bending over her she had begun steadily to amend; the fever had left her, and though the weakness was great, the tinge of returning health stole back to the white face.

"You will do now: Dr. Grey says in a few weeks you will be as well as ever, but you will have to be careful for a long time," Will said to her one day, when he found her propped up upon the couch in a nest of pillows, and looking almost as fragile as the snowdrops on her little table.

"Then I shall not be a cripple for life, or like you, dear," whispered Dym, speaking out her fear for the first time.

"Why, of course not; what a silly Dimples to think of such a thing!" was his tender answer, as she hid her face gladly—oh, so gladly!—on his shoulder. "Mine was a complication of disease, aggravated by neglect; if I had had nurses like yours, Dym—Why, you silly child," as a slight sob warned him he was trenching on dangerous ground, "do you think I repent of what has given me so much experience? Don't you know, what is, is best?"

"But I cannot bear to think how you suffered, Will."

"Pooh-pooh! what nonsense!" he returned merrily, but a slight dew made his glasses misty again. "Has it not gained me my name of 'Conqueror?' Why, I would rather go bowed all my life than think of your pretty figure being spoiled. You must grow fat, Dym; you look far too transparent for my peace of mind."

"Will," she said seriously, "you have never told me how it is you are spared so long from St. Luke's."

"Haven't I? Ah, well, you must ask Mr. Chichester about that."

"Of course, I knew it was all his kindness," returned Dym, reddening like a rose.

"My dear Dym," replied her brother, "I begin to think your Squire is the most generous mortal living."

Dym gave a great sigh of assent.

"Do you know, all the time you were ill he either wrote or telegraphed to me daily; but the kindness that beat all others was the way he got me leave of absence from St. Luke's."

"I have not heard—how was that?" inquired Dym.

"Why, he fetched me himself;" and, as his sister uttered an exclamation of incredulity, he continued, "True as my name is William Elliott. I found him engrossing the whole fire one evening when I came in from the schools.

"'She is not worse, old fellow, but she wants to see you,' were his first words—I suppose I turned a little pale when I saw him—'so button up your warmest coat and come off with me.' And when I hesitated, I found he had made it all right with the vicar, and had actually brought down a deputy-curate—a Mr. Lythe—in my place; he is just ordained to priest's orders, and one of the hardest-working men I ever knew—just the man for St. Luke's; and he actually got

the vicar to consent to his carrying me off for two months."

"Two months! oh, how delightful, Will!" cried Dym; but she was too weak to bear such good news, and in spite of her efforts the tears would come.

"He is so good, and I have behaved so badly towards him. O Will! have you heard—" and perhaps the happiest moment Dym had known for months was when she had sobbed out her confession to her brother, and received his sympathizing kiss.

"You have been sorely punished, my poor child," he said; "few have to expiate their faults to such a bitter extent, but I hope we have seen the worst of this trouble now." But Will did not tell Dym that he had seen Honor, and that Honor had believed herself to be dying; Dym did not learn that for many days afterwards. "She is better," or "more comfortable," was all they said to Dym's anxious inquiries. For a little time Dym's sufferings had to a certain extent deadened her anxiety, but with her returning convalescence came remorseful fears for Honor.

"If I could only see her; if you would carry me in and lay me down beside her for a few minutes!" Dym would implore her nurses, but they always put her off with some excuse or other: she was sleeping, or she must not be disturbed, or it would be bad for Dym to be removed, or so on.

One day, the second after William Elliott had

arrived, Humphrey came to him—Honor thought herself worse, she wanted a clergyman; Mr. Fortescue had gone up to London for a day, would Mr. Elliott come to her?

Will bowed his head and followed him silently. He knew now it was Guy Chichester's beloved to whom he was to minister.

But he never forgot his first impression of Honor Nethecote. Honor thought she was dying because weakness had quelled her; the grand figure lay bowed, broken, waiting for some unknown change; the wide-open eyes had lost their light, the flesh-tints resembled marble; lips, nostrils, cheeks were all of the same neutral dead-white; the sunshine seemed faded out of the brown hair, the splendid arms and hands had fallen prone on the coverlid.

She had gathered herself up with all her strength to die; there was meek martyrdom in her aspect, but the strength had not come. Instead of that, William Elliott read weakness, a fading hope akin to despair, feminine tremors, and something else.

He took one of the passive hands. She looked at him calmly, but without a smile.

"You have sent for me, Miss Nethecote—you think yourself worse?"

"I feel as though I were dying;" her voice was resigned and pathetic.

"Perhaps you fear death?" groping his way a little, until the unknown mind should reveal itself.

"Not for myself."

"Ah!"

Her bosom heaved, she lifted her hands deprecatingly; she desired sympathy, but pity was abhorrent to her.

"You will not allow yourself to hope—you wish life too much, perhaps; you have let yourself go, as it were, but you are not resigned."

"Oh, that I were! but I am not. No, not even when I look at that"—pointing to a picture of the Crucifixion that hung opposite her bed. "I pray—I suffer," whispering out her words, "but my will—ah, there it is—my will refuses to yield."

"Poor soul! yet you will not die."

Honor's lips unclosed; she panted; her wistful eyes questioned him—she had no words.

"You have renounced the world too soon," he returned pityingly; "I read life, not death, in your face. Did not your doctor reassure you?"

"I did not believe him; doctors will not tell the truth," was the brief answer.

"Your nurses?"

"They have deceived me before."

"Your brother, then?"

"Poor Humphrey—oh, he was not disinterested!"

"Then you may trust me—will you not?" in a mild beseeching voice.

Honor gave him her first smile. "I sent for you to read the Office for the Dying."

"Shall we say the Thanksgiving together instead?" was his reply; and when he had

risen from his knees he said solemnly, "You sent for me to prepare you for death, Miss Nethecote, but I have a harder duty than that before me; it is rather to prepare you for life. 'Drawn out of many waters.' Ah, we have our work of love to do after that. Do you think you have done the best you could with your life?"

"Perhaps not," she answered humbly. A ray of joy shone in her eyes; there was revived life in her aspect; he had given her the strong cordial of hope; she was weak, but oppressed no longer.

"Strength is never given us before the time. You did not will to die. Well, perhaps not, neither has He willed it. He has never bidden you to give up; be comforted, Miss Nethecote. He has still work for you to do."

"Oh, how you console me!"

"That you may console others. This gift of life will be joyful news to others beside yourself, Miss Nethecote; dedicate it afresh nobly. Are there none beside yourself to be forgiven and comforted?"

Did she understand him? The meek pathetic eyes grew radiant.

"Ah, if I dared; if it would only be right!" she faltered.

"Unto seventy times seven: have you forgotten that, Miss Nethecote?"

The white lips quivered. "What, have I been wrong all through? is that what you mean? Is it I who ought to have forgiven? You are a clergyman. I see, you know all; tell me."

"Not now; when you are stronger perhaps. Say your *Te Deum* now, and try to sleep;" and so he blessed her and went. But not many days after she sent for him again.

"You must hear me now," she said; and the noble heart disburdened itself.

"These great souls sin deeply," was William Elliott's simple comment. "Now I know both sides and can judge fairly. You are a good woman, but you have been less generous than he. I am Guy Chichester's friend, and I dare to tell you of your faults."

"Oh, do," she humbly prayed him.

"You loved him *truly*, but you loved your own will better; you might have trusted him."

"I will," said Honor Nethecote; and she kept her word.

"When?" he inquired softly.

"Wait a little, you will see," was her answer; and from that moment she began rapidly to amend.

William Elliott's prophecy was correct. From the day of his conversation with her there was a marked change in Honor.

Earnest in everything, she set herself to get well with all the strength of her womanly will; she did not linger over her convalescence as poor Dym was doing; the real vigour of her constitution asserted itself; in a marvellously short time she took off her sickness, and declared herself well. She smiled with sweet incredulity when Dr. Grey quoted to her the two favourite sayings

of the celebrated Bishop of Geneva—"Make haste slowly," and "Well enough is soon enough"—declaring he would have them written up in letters of gold in every room of convalescence; and when Honor scolded him for perverting such noble maxims to mere bodily uses he returned seriously, "We are not always merciful to the poor body, or we should not lay such heavy burdens on it before it is fairly recruited and ready for work. You will not be the woman you were for a long time to come, Miss Nethecote; be careful. I am not sure yet that I shall not recommend your brother to take you southward for a winter or two;" and more than once he repeated the same thing very gravely.

Honor did not refuse to hearken, but for all that she set her nurses at naught; and one wild March day, when the winds seemed blowing from the four quarters of heaven, and the sunshine fell in broken streaks on the window ledges, Honor crept into Dym's room, looking as fair and white as one of her favourite lilies.

Dym was lying alone and feeling as dreary as the prospect outside; two gaunt poplars waved to and fro before her window; the bare boughs creaked in the gusty air; the low apple-trees flapped noisily; a robin flew down on the white garden path; the grasses shivered; a whirl of grey dust was everywhere.

"Poor little robin out there in the cold!" thought Dym. "Ah, that was what Honor called me," she sighed at the remembrance, and half turned; and there was Honor looking at

her, and in another moment they were clasped in each other's arms.

It was a long, clinging embrace, for community of suffering had united those two dissimilar natures indissolubly. The thin white faces met lovingly, but Honor was the first to disengage herself.

"I am very womanish and weak still," she said, with a little gentle effort after merriment; but Dym's agitation was infectious, and she subsided into her chair with wet eyes, as Dym still clung to her, and covered the hand she held with tears and kisses.

"Come, birdie, this will not do;" but Honor fondled her still more lovingly.

"You have been so ill, Honor, and all through me," sobbed Dym. "I wonder you do not hate the sight of me. Will has told me how they feared for you."

"I thought I was at death's door, but he brought me back," replied Honor gravely; but her tones shook a little. "I wanted sadly to see you, dear, but they would not let me. Perhaps it was as well; my looks might have frightened you."

"You are not quite the same Honor now," returned Dym in a distressed voice; and she was right: the beautiful eyes had a heavy look in them; the temples were blue-veined and had deep hollows; the wasted hands and arms were pitiful.

Honor gave a weak little laugh. "Comparisons are odious. You cannot talk yourself,

Dym. You have lost all your pretty colour, and your eyes are twice the size they ought to be."

"That is what Will says. O Honor, you have seen Will!"

"Yes, I have seen him. If it were not for Humphrey, I think I should envy you your brother; as it is, for the future I shall reverence him almost as much as you do."

"I am so glad," sighed Dym. "But is it not sad—his affliction I mean? He is quite young, but he looks older than Mr. Nethecote."

"Does he? I did not notice. I only thought what a beautiful soul he must have to look and speak so; but then you see I always knew he must be good."

"Why, Honor?"

"Because you loved him so, and because he was Mr. Chichester's friend," answered Honor simply; and just then the subject of their talk entered.

They were in the pretty little morning room that Honor called her boudoir, and which had been appropriated to Dym's use. Will gave a start of surprise when he saw Miss Nethecote; he thought to have found his sister alone as usual; but, as he told Guy Chichester afterwards, he had never seen a prettier sight than those two women clinging together hand in hand.

The firelight played on Dym's rose-coloured wrapper and loose shining hair. Honor leant back a little wearily; she had knotted up her

brown hair tightly, and by some quaint sweet fashion of her own wore a white cashmere dress, trimmed with soft fur at the neck and wrists; the full throat gleamed whitely from the dainty ruff; the calm repose, the full breathing life of the figure was in strange juxtaposition to the inert, hopeless lethargy in which he had seen it last.

A faint colour rose to her face, as though his entrance stirred some memory.

"I hope I do not disturb you. I am glad to see you so much better, Miss Nethecote;" holding her hand with congratulating pressure.

"Thank you, I am well;" but the trembling of the fingers was not lost on him.

"Forgive me, if I contradict you," he returned cheerily. "You are not so much above us poor mortals as that. You are still weak enough to be nervous."

"I have no nerves," she assured him calmly.

"Not ordinary ones, I grant you; you are too finely tempered for that. Dym, Mr. Chichester has sent you these flowers," throwing her a bouquet of violets and snowdrops, at which Dym blushed brightly with surprise and pleasure. "He wants to know if you have any message for St. Luke's?"

"St. Luke's!" Miss Nethecote leant back in her chair; there was a slight quiver of the nostrils; her eyelids flickered, and then swept her cheek. Will's eyes noted the sudden paleness. He smiled to himself, as though he thought Miss Nethecote's nerves were not invulnerable.

"It is a sudden fancy of his to go up by the mail-train to-night. Lythe has been writing up about some riot in the schools. I tell him it is madness to travel by night such weather, but he is obstinate as usual. He is out riding now, but I suppose he will be back by evening."

Honor shielded her eyes with her hand; there was doubt, irresolution, a slight confusion in her aspect; then she decided.

"Mr. Elliott."

Will almost started; the voice was changed and trembling.

"Will you give him a message from me?"

"A hundred, if you will," he returned gaily.

She smiled; her colour rose; a faint, fair tinge spread over brow, cheek, and neck, touching the delicate ear; there was a strange shining light in the brown eyes that almost dazzled him. She pencilled a few words hastily on a slip of paper, and crossing the room with weak slow footsteps, put it into his hand.

And this was what Guy Chichester read some hours afterwards:

"Come to me before you go.

"HONOR BRIGHT."

CHAPTER VII.

"THE DAYS THAT ARE NO MORE."

"DEAR, are you asleep?" asked Honor presently. With the twilight she had stolen back into Dym's room; the candles were still unlighted, but the pine-knots diffused a warm spicy odour through the room; the firelight played on the low ceiling and over the brackets and statuettes; the wind had lulled, and the moon shone through the uncurtained window, through which still waved the shadows of the gaunt poplars.

Dym lay so still that Honor had more than once fancied she was asleep.

"No; only thinking, Honor."

"So was I. How silent we have both been! Dym, have you ever tried to find out the reason of a sudden silence?"

"No, dear." Dym's tone was languid; she was on the dim borderland where the introspective meets melancholy; her thoughts were undefinable—a trifle sad. She roused into outer life with difficulty.

"I had a little sister once, and when we were children together, and this silence fell between us like a veil, my mother would lift up her

hand and say gently—I can hear her quiet voice now—"Hush, children, an angel is passing through the room;" and sometimes, so strong is childish faith, I could almost fancy a soft wing brushed past me."

"What a beautiful thought!" returned Dym in an awe-struck voice.

"It teaches reverence in silence as well as words. 'The cloud of witnesses' are too often absent from our mind. Dym, there is something heavy on my heart to-night, as though some coming joy oppressed me. After all, there is something awful in a great happiness."

"Are you so happy, Honor?" and Dym sighed.

"Yes, happy; happier than I have ever been in my life. Dym, sometimes I fancy we are friends," her voice rounding and modulating into sweetness.

"Dear Honor, I trust so," throwing her arms round her neck; "if I were only worthy," she added, touched with sudden humility.

"Nay, worthiness has nothing to do with it; we have known too little of each other's deeds for that; it is more a matter of feeling."

"Well!"

"I feel—at least my instinct perceives—you love me."

"And you?"

"I reciprocate the feeling, certainly; but I am not a demonstrative woman to women; it is my nature to take care of people, so I have a soft place in my heart for you and Esther."

"That sounds cold."

"Perhaps I mean more than my words. Once we were together in a great suffering; since then I have longed to tell you of my trouble. You guessed I had one?" interrogatively.

"I feel as though I know it. You have a sad look in your eyes, Honor, sometimes when you think no one is looking; as though," added Dym, with a sudden feeling after truth,—"as though you had lost something."

Honor sighed. "So I had—I had lost my lover. Six years ago, Guy Chichester and I were to have been married."

A sudden start, almost a tremor, ran through Dym's frame. "Ah!" she cried; and then, as though involuntarily, "I always thought there was something between you. Poor Honor, dear Honor," stroking her hand. "But—but he likes you still?"

"He does; it is not his nature to change."

"O Honor, it was surely not you?"

"What do you think?" she inquired in a strangely quiet voice; "is Guy Chichester a man who could tire a woman's love?" And as Dym was only silent and hid her face in her neck, "There is not a moment since the day he first told me that he loved me in which I would not have laid down my life for him a dozen times over—ay, gladly, too—even when I refused to marry him."

"Who came between you, then? what does it mean?" asked Dym faintly.

But Honor only answered very proudly and

sadly, "No one came between us; we were always true to each other," and remained for a long time silent.

"It is a long story," she continued, as Dym hardly knew how to break the pause; "there are wheels within wheels. I hardly understand it myself—perhaps we were both to blame; I begin to think so now. If Guy had been different, or if I had been a meek, manageable woman, I might have been his wife years ago. Dym, have you ever heard of the Chichester temper?" And as Dym shook her head, "What, have you never heard the villagers talk of the old Squire, Guy's father? When I was little more than a child I used to fear his very shadow."

"Mrs. Chichester very rarely speaks of him," returned Dym.

"Yet report says she loved him dearly, and that with all his faults he was never ungentle to her. Many families have an hereditary taint in them. If village gossip is to be believed, in old days the Chichester temper was a terror to their generation. Guy's father and grandfather were both headstrong violent men; and his great uncle, Heriot Chichester, murdered his sweetheart in a fit of jealousy."

"O Honor, how terrible!"

"There are other tales more dreadful still. I have seen Guy turn pale when this story was repeated. According to the old traditions, all the men were brave and passionate, and all the women were singularly gentle and beautiful. I have seen a picture of this Heriot Chichester,

dressed as an officer in the Guards, and it is singular how much his face resembles Guy's."

"But his sweetheart!" faintly inquired Dym.

"I have seen her portrait too—a crayon sketch done by her lover's hand—and under it, written in a man's bold characters, "My sweetheart Marjory." She was a village girl, and he was educating her to be his wife, when one evening some rival made him believe her false, and in his madness he lifted his hand against her. The story says she kissed his hand with her dying lips, and cried out that she was innocent, and that she loved him still."

"Did they kill him?" asked Dym, shuddering over her own question.

"They would have hung him of course, but in his remorse he shot himself in the very place where he had murdered his victim. Do you know, murderer and suicide as he was, I never look at his portrait without pitying him. Poor miserable Heriot! It used to be a favourite name, but no Chichester has borne it since. I ought not to have told you this old story perhaps, but it haunts me to-night in spite of myself.

"But I was speaking of the time when Guy and I were engaged. From the first his mother was my enemy; nay," as Dym started, "I do not wish to say a word against her. She was a good woman; under other circumstances we might have loved each other; but she could not forgive me for winning her son's heart.

"I think she would have been jealous of any daughter-in-law, for Guy was her only son, and

she had made him her idol; but she chose to consider it a mésalliance—the whole affair was abhorrent in her eyes. All the Chichesters had married well. Some of their wives had noble blood in their veins; no one but that unfortunate Heriot had meditated an alliance beneath him. With all her gentleness Mrs. Chichester is a very proud woman. In vain was it represented to her that I was a physician's daughter; in vain Humphrey, by worth and integrity, had achieved success and raised himself to his present position—she could not forget the old days when he was under-bailiff in her husband's service, and we lived in the old lodgings in the mill-house, and no one in Birstwith visited us. I am afraid there were bitter scenes up at the Great House. For a long time my life was made miserable by the dissensions.

"I ask you was it right for any mother to come between two hearts that loved each other? I answer it now as I did then, "No." I remained true to Guy.

"There was a young girl staying up at the Great House—his Cousin Beatrix—and young as she was—scarcely more than a child—she had conceived an unfortunate attachment to Guy. Guy never saw it, never would see it. I believe he denies it still. Sometimes in our lives we are exposed to alien influences. From the first I mistrusted Beatrix. I knew she disliked and was jealous of me. I remember instances of petty spite which I was far too proud to notice.

"A little while before Guy and I plighted our

troth to each other, I had the misfortune to be thrown continually into the society of one of his college friends. He made me an offer of marriage. I need not say it was declined, and in a way that left him no ground for farther advances. I do not wish even now to accuse any one, but I am sure, as far as a woman can be sure, that Sydney Mordaunt was a bad man; that he would have stopped at nothing to secure me. Such a passion as he had conceived could scarcely be a generous one. Unfortunately, in his despair he selected Beatrix as his confidante. Ah, Dym, as I told you, there were wheels within wheels. Every one was against me—his mother, Beatrix, and Sydney Mordaunt. But how they first poisoned Guy's mind against me I never knew, only that the tissue of half-truths must have been more deadly than a whole fabric of lies. I do not think Guy really believed them; but he grew a little stern in his manner. His lordly will asserted itself beforehand, and I was not a meek woman. Often he commanded where he ought to have sued. I was not one to yield where my reason was unsatisfied; no, not though I loved him better as the days went on.

"The first misunderstanding was a very trifling one. He wanted me to come up to Ingleside, to be introduced to some friends of his mother's, who were anxious to see me; but Humphrey was unwell, and I had promised to stay with him. It was the first clash of our wills. I saw a specimen of the Chichester temper then. He must have wanted me sorely, or they had twitted him

with my unfeminine independence, for he never came near me for two days.

"I was so miserable without him that I forgave him the first moment I saw him, though I was aware he hardly showed fitting penitence for his fault. But a woman is seldom hard on her lover. I suppose my tacit submission soothed him, for things went on smoothly again between us, till the time came for fixing the wedding-day, and then there was another clashing of wills.

"For some reason that I am not clear about now, Humphrey had made me promise not to leave him till after the new year; but Guy, who was roving by nature, had made up his mind to winter in Rome. One day he came down to the cottage flushed and eager, and pressed me to name an early day in September. Strange to say, he had won over his mother to wish it too, and he was the bearer of a missive, in which she begged me, somewhat peremptorily, to reconsider my former objections, and to be guided by her son's wishes.

"I would have married Guy gladly, but there was my promise. Humphrey had been more a father than a brother to me, and I was bound to respect his wishes. A few months' delay would have hurt neither of us; and Guy knew that Humphrey had just lost his betrothed. It was so unlike Guy's usual unselfishness to wish it, that I am sure some secret pressure had been put on him. Afterwards I heard that people were coupling mine and Mr. Mordaunt's name together in an injurious way, and Mr.

Mordaunt could not be induced to contradict it. There had been a fierce quarrel between the two, and Sydney Mordaunt had defied him.

"Guy was too generous to repeat these tales; but he wanted me to marry him, and put a stop to them all. But there was my promise. O Dym, those were weary days! They called me cold and unyielding, and said I could not love him. No one spoke a kind word for me. But indeed he did not treat me well. The fierce ungovernable temper rose at every provocation, and Beatrix knew how to fan the flame. Humphrey was too stupefied with his own grief to see how I was harassed. There were stormy scenes, reproaches, entreaties that were worse than wrath; and one night, when the anger in Guy's eyes was something terrible, when he looked as Heriot Chichester might have looked when he thought Marjory had been false—that night they had made him believe that I had ceased to love him.

"The next day I gave him back his troth. He had said words to me that I could bear from no man. I had done nothing that he should distrust me. I loved him still but I would rather have died than married him. It had come upon me with a terror of anguish that such wills as ours would never blend; and so I made up my mind never to be Guy Chichester's wife."

"O Honor, were you afraid of him?"

"I was, and I was not. I think I should have been like Marjory. But he must have killed me before he broke my will. Ah, how I

wish for his sake I had been different! A gentler woman would have hindered his mad fits coming on him. Look here;" and Honor lifted up her sleeve and showed a faint scar on her white arm, just above the elbow. "That was done when I turned to leave him; and he held me fast. See how the facets of the ring have cut into the flesh. I saw him turn pale when the blood started.

"They tell me Guy was literally a madman after that. For a time he left home. He must have travelled nearly over the world; for I heard of him being in America, India, and afterwards in Egypt, and for two years we did not meet. Humphrey had commenced farming on his own account; and shortly after these sad events we settled down in Nidderdale Cottage. Aunt Dorothy had left me her little fortune, and we were fairly rich.

"I need not tell you what those years were to me. Those who have loved and suffered can imagine what I went through. One evening as I was sitting alone, looking out on the sunshine and lilies, a shadow passed the window, and Guy, thin, brown, and bearded, stood before me.

"Do you know what he came for? To ask me to forgive him. As though I had not forgiven and blessed him every night of my life! but when he asked me to marry him, again I would not. How could I, when I could not trust him? And yet," and here Honor pushed the hair from her face, and went on hurriedly,

"three times since then he has come to me with the same pleading question on his lips, the same look of love in his eyes, and three times I have said him nay. But he never reproaches me now: instead of that, year by year I have seen the stern mastery over his passions; year by year he grows more self-controlled and less reckless. Now you know the secret of his noble work at St. Luke's, and how he cools the fierce blood in his veins by sleepless nights and self-denying labours among the sick and dying. There is a singular friendship between us. When the angry moods are on him, they say nothing but my influence can soothe and restrain him. Even Mrs. Chichester owns it, and sends for me in all her troubles. Once with tears she prayed me to come to her and be her daughter. To do her justice, I believe she repents of her former unkindness. Humphrey pleads for him too. He tells me Guy has made a vow to win me yet. Dym," stroking her hair, "are you not sorry for me?"

"I am more sorry for him. O Honor, surely, surely you must trust him now!"

Honor's answer was low and emphatic: "I suppose I do, for," leaning over and kissing her softly, "I mean to be his wife!"

"Honor, why have you told me this?"

There had been a brief interval of silence, only broken by the slow dropping of the pine-knots on the hearth. The creeping shadows on the ceiling widened and spread into grotesque shapes; the ragged edges of the poplars still

swayed and flickered on the blinds. Outside, the soughing and creaking of the boughs still blended at intervals with the dull roll of the rising wind; the moon was watery, and shone with dim unequal light. Inside, the soft variable firelight played on the two faces—one downcast, troubled, moved by strange yearnings, woke into sudden pain; the other agitated by a joy that found its only safety in silence.

"Honor, why have you told me this?" The question seemed to break involuntarily from Dym. She had listened to Honor's narrative with hidden face and compressed lips. Now and then, a low interjection of surprise—a word or two, keynote to an intense sympathy—gave evidence that the listener had not grown weary; but now the story was finished, it was wonderful how little Dym found to say. Only the tightening of her arms round Honor's neck, and the heavy droop of her cheek on Honor's breast, were eloquent enough.

"Why have I told you? Indeed, I hardly know: confidence is easily shared with one we love. Are those tears in your eyes, Dym?"

"Never mind them; bend down your head, Honor. Lower! lower yet!"

And as Honor's calm beauty seemed to lean over and envelope her: "I kiss this dear face, which I have grown to love, oh, so dearly. I bid God bless it! O Honor darling! may you be happy! may you be very, very happy!" and Dym cast herself into her arms in a fit of bitter weeping.

"Hush, love! Nay, we must be calm! We have neither of us strength to spare for tears. Are you sorry for my happiness, then?"

"Sorry! oh, no!—glad, only glad."

"You must not cry, then," replied Honor, hushing her with sweet peremptoriness. "Dym, you will not lose your friend."

With womanly instinct she had touched the sore place; and though Dym winced, her tears flowed less painfully.

"You are Guy's *protégée*. He is such a faithful friend, you will never be less to him because" —here Honor's firm tones faltered a little— "because I am giving him back his happiness."

Had she guessed Dym's innocent secret—the pure girl-worship that had elevated Guy Chichester into an ideal, a hero invested by her imagination with all a hero's nobility? Had she given Dym this touching mark of her confidence because those wise woman's eyes had read something of which Dym herself was ignorant?

Dym could make nothing of the dull nameless pain that had lain so heavy on her heart as Honor talked. Unknown pangs, an odd doubt and dread, seemed to seize her, as she listened. Guileless and unsuspecting by nature, singularly childish in matters on which girlhood is often prematurely wise, Dym had never shrunk from openly avowing her intense reverence and loyalty to Guy Chichester.

It was this childish frankness that had roused honest Humphrey's surprise. In his old-fashioned creed, Dym's lack of reticence, her innocent ad-

miration, her one-sided enthusiasm, had first baffled and then interested him. He could not understand it. By-and-bye, he indulged in clumsy jokes about Dym's hero. Dym took them in excellent part. She rather enjoyed them than otherwise; and so Humphrey learned to think lightly of the whole thing; and her staunch allegiance to her benefactor was only an added beauty in his eyes.

But Honor, who had long read her brother's secret, doubted and sighed.

It was only hero-worship—the purest love of which a girl's nature was capable. But it had this one danger. Guy's fascination would blind Dym to lesser lights: other men would fall short of such a standard. Dym's humility and childishness kept her safe, it was true, from the danger of unrequited love; but was it likely that she would ever be induced to listen to Humphrey's homely suit; that she could be satisfied with a nature that could give her plenty of honest manly love, but which could afford no scope for her imagination?

"She will never love Humphrey," Honor often said sorrowfully to herself.

And once, "She loves Guy Chichester; but it is the love of a child rather than a woman."

Perhaps Honor had come very near the secret sting of Dym's pain. She was not sorry for Honor's happiness—nay, she rejoiced in it—but the thought of losing her friend was dreadful to her. His presence had grown to be as essential to her as the sunshine to her health. His

words, his smiles, were meat and drink to her. When she was drooping, his energy revived her; his quaint wisdom, his odd philosophy, seemed to brace her morally, as a pure moorland breeze would have done physically. Insensibly she adopted his opinions, looked at things as he looked at them, and steered herself by his compass.

As she remained silent, her mind stretched itself back to embrace the few months during which she had known him. A few months, barely a year, and yet how it had changed her whole life!

Once Will was everything to her. Now had Will become only the second?

She remembered their first meeting. The tall bearded stranger, that seemed to block up the narrow schoolroom; the vigorous voice and laugh; the keen quizzical eyes, that even that first evening seemed to gauge the depths of her childish intellect; the frank chivalry that prompted him to take up cudgels in defence of a poor friendless governess.

She had liked him even then, when he was only "Cousin Guy," Edith's kind friend and guardian.

But he was Will's hero too—the veritable Mr. Latimer, the Great Unknown, whose eccentric virtues they had often discussed.

Dym thought of those happy evenings in Paradise Row. How kindly, how gently he had ever borne himself! How he had planned and arranged for her comfort, comporting himself

towards her more like some grave elder brother! Even as the master of Ingleside there had been nothing haughty and wounding in his treatment of her. He had been brusque; but even in his brusquerie there had been something genial. He had dictated: people said Guy Chichester could be masterful and peremptory at times; but with one sad exception Dym had learned to obey. Was it not reward enough to win one of those bright pleasant smiles? She had never seen him since the night when he had folded her in his plaid, and carried her over those bleak wintry fields. His last act had been one of mute reproach, when he had nearly broken her heart by refusing to accept a trifling service at her hand. Now on that night, when she had pushed him from her in half-delirious agony, he had gathered her to him with gentle words, and borne her swiftly in his strong arms through the cold and darkness. Her hero! her master! her friend! No, there was only one woman worthy of him—the woman whose fair face was bending over her now so anxiously. Dym's sorrowful humility had no envy in it. She let Honor soothe her with soft words and plentiful caresses: only when she had left her, she put up her hands to her face, and cried out to herself, only very softly, lest any should hear, that she had lost her friend, and prayed that God would bless them and take care of her.

That sense of loss is a terrible one to a woman—to centre one's interest, one's love or friendship on one object—an object perhaps worthy of

our deepest reverence—and then to see it gather some new affection into its life, and leave us outside in the cold. They are the same to us, they say; we have not lost our friend; our place by the hearth is the same. True; but the fire is not burning brightly for us: its warmest light and heat are given to another.

Good heavens! the unrequited, unsatisfied hunger and thirst of many a woman's nature—fountains that might water the desert with their sweetness—left arid and dry, their springs clogged up; no marvel if the empty channels are stony enough sometimes. Lives must be lived; affection will not always be choked: a warm loving heart must find vent for itself. "If he ask bread, shall he give him a stone?" Oh, these mighty mysteries, these unsolved questions—are there no answers in the infinite? Yea, peace; "it needs be." These are the hearts that embrace a whole world—these are the sympathies that grasp the unloved little ones, the fallen, the lonely, the miserable, and strain them to warm, throbbing bosoms.

"There are who sigh that no fond heart is theirs: None loves them best."

Perhaps there are those who recall how the great Christian poet of our century touched gently on this sore unhealed place of many a lonely life, and the marvellous answer—too sacred to be written here—which he has recorded for their comfort. Still, with all reverence, there are other and practical solutions to these social enigmas. We talk of wasted, disappointed lives,

of blighted affections, of the loneliness of an unmarried woman's home; and in doing so we overlook manifold blessings, wondrous opportunities, and, perchance, the end and object of it all. As a woman writer of the present day very sweetly and sensibly says: "When there really seems to be so much kindness and gentle-heartedness, one is the more impatient of a certain melancholy, desponding spirit which seems to prevail so often. . . . What possible reason can there be to prevent unmarried, any more than married, people from being happy or unhappy, according to their circumstances—from enjoying other pleasures more lively than the griefs and sufferings of their neighbours? Are unmarried people shut out from all theatres, concerts, picture galleries, parks, and gardens? May they not walk out every day of the week? Are they locked up all the summer-time, and only let out when an east wind is blowing?"*

We claim for our unmarried women the foremost place in the noble ranks of the workers. Who fill our religious communities, our sisterhoods, our hospital wards? Who are our sunniest writers? Who carry on noble labours for the poor and fallen of our sex? The world may spare a pity that degrades and wounds; sentimentalism may cease; useless regrets and foolish sophisms; the eccentric genius, self-directed and misguided, may leave off blazoning the empty sounds of woman's rights and woman's

* Miss Thackeray's *Toilers and Spinsters.*

wrongs. The real woman, ennobled by work, and merging her identity in others, has found her right place, and can live out a glorious life, though it be not sweetened by mere earthly love. To forget herself—to live in others' lives—to love with an unselfishness that demands little in return—to have real palpable work, and to do it with one's whole heart and brain—and to look forward to the "rest that remaineth"—this is all that is needed to make the life of even the despised old maid "something akin to the angels."

Nor let it be said in thus proudly advocating the cause of the single, who have certainly their own burden to bear, that we slur over the simple kindly virtues of those more fortunate sisters who have found a strong arm to lean on. Methinks their temptation must be greater whose happiness is so rounded and perfected, that they sometimes see heaven mirrored on earth, and so lose the things that are invisible.

In the eyes of many there might appear something over-strained and exaggerated in Dym's affection for Guy Chichester. The world is given to look coldly on these sorts of platonic friendship; and in the main I am inclined to think the world may be right. Very rarely we may find a safe exception.

Dym's pure childlike nature found its safeguard in ignorance. At present it was merely hero-worship, and the grateful love of the benefited to the benefactor. Had Guy Chichester been old and grey-bearded, Dym would have had the same

admiring tenderness, only it would have been more openly avowed. Dym's sorrow, when she read the ending to Honor's story, was merely caused by the instinctive dread of losing her friend: some instinct warned her that such a change must influence her own life. In their perfect happiness they would not need her. Honor would take her place: her work at Ingleside would be over.

"Out in the cold indeed!" Poor little, fluttering, childish heart, growing womanly out of very pain, tasting for the first time the bitter-sweet of life!

Dym's troubled thoughts were carrying her into weary speculations about the future, when a quick tap at the door recalled her to the present. It could only be Humphrey, who had been of late a frequent visitor; certainly Dym's low-voiced "Come in" had no welcoming sound in it.

"That sounded dubious; are you sure I may come in?"

Dym's heart gave a sudden bound. How many weeks had it been since she had heard that kindly voice? The ruddy flame leaped up among the scattered logs as Guy Chichester's broad shoulders blocked up the doorway, and his keen inquisitive glance scanned sofa and window-seat as though in search of some one; then he paused, and put his hand to his beard with the old movement of dissatisfied impatience. "Are you alone? I thought—Where is Miss Nethecote?"

Dym had stretched out her hands with an involuntary cry of surprise and pleasure; now

they dropped to her side, and her lip quivered like a child. She had not seen him since that night, and yet he had no welcome for her; he had saved her from the cold and darkness only for this!

This was Dym's first unreasoning thought. Her second was to cry shame on her selfishness; surely the first welcome should be Honor's.

"She was here just now; she will come back directly. Will you ring? Shall I send for her?" Dym's quavering voice had not a note of strength in it; it silenced Guy Chichester's impatience directly.

"By no means. I can wait; only she sent for me. Ah, my child, how you have suffered!" And moved to sudden compassion by the sight of the sweet pale face, Mr. Chichester stooped over her couch and lifted the little hand to his lips.

The grave caress was too much for Dym; her colour fluttered dangerously, and the large dark eyes brimmed over with tears.

"Dear child, I have been so sorry for you; but you are better now?"

"Much better;" and then, under her breath, "Oh, I am so glad to see you again, Mr. Chichester."

The frank kindness of his look said he was glad too.

"I have missed my little friend," sitting down by her, and glancing pitifully at the wasted hands and sunken cheeks; "you must make haste and come back to us; my mother has been quite lost without you."

"Your mother—oh, she has been so good to me!"

"Ingleside is not the same place to her without you. How have you managed to creep so far into her heart?"

"I don't know," smiling faintly. "Did you say you had missed me, Mr. Chichester?"

"Of course"—with his old mischievous look; "I have no one to contradict me now." But he repented of his jest when he saw Dym cover her face with her thin hands. "My dear child—nay, I was only jesting. No, I will not have this," taking down her hands authoritatively. Then, as he read traces of real agitation in the white trembling lip, "Miss Elliott, my poor girl, why, what is this?"

"O Mr. Chichester, if you would only tell me you have forgiven me!" Dym's two hands went out imploringly to him. In spite of her trouble she looked such a child, with her long wavy hair floating on the pillow, that he could not refrain from an exclamation of pity. So young and weak, how could he have found it in his heart to have been so stern with her?

"If you will let me hear you say so once, I think I could be almost happy."

"Hush!" was all his answer; "you are hurting me."

"Again?" her voice breaking almost into a sob, "can I do nothing to atone for my fault, then?"

"You have atoned for it over and over again. I will not have you bring up these old troubles."

"I cannot help it. Has not my imprudence nearly cost Honor's life?"

Mr. Chichester shuddered. "True," he muttered; then, as he raised his eyes and saw Dym's wistful look, he generously hastened to comfort her. "Will it make you happier to hear it? Well, then, I forgive you freely. Are you satisfied now?"

"But if she had died!" Dym half whispered to himself; and again that quick shudder passed over him.

"If she had," catching his breath, then speaking calmly—"if she had, I should still have forgiven you."

"O Mr. Chichester!"

"I should have been to blame as well as you." Then breaking into one of his sunny smiles, "But we will not imagine such dreadful things; Honor is safe and you are better, and God has been very good to us." But the mention of her name brought back the old impatience; he rose from his seat and began pacing the room.

"Do you know what has become of her?" I shall lose my train, and I think she wishes to speak to me;" and his hand rested furtively where Honor's little pencilled note was hidden.

"If you go down I will send her to you." And Guy, who needed no other bidding, came up to her couch again to bid her good-bye.

"I shall not see you again, I suppose; good-night, rest well." But Dym's wistful hand detained him.

"We are friends again, Mr. Chichester?"

"Ay, surely. Why not?"

"Sick people have curious whims sometimes. I wish you would call me that again."

"What, my little friend?"

"I like that too; but there is a name you use sometimes;" and strange to say, he understood her.

"Silly child," he said, with an indulgent smile. "You are getting spoiled amongst us. There, good-night, my child, good-night. Why do you look so grave?"

"I was only thinking of our motto, you remember, *Qui patitur vincit;* it comes true always. Good-night, God bless you, Mr. Chichester!"

Did he understand her?

"He is come," was all she said to Honor, whom she found sitting alone in the moonlight. Honor bent her head in response, and a moment afterwards noiselessly left the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

CROWNED.

GUY CHICHESTER was alone.

Honor's pretty sitting-room had a pleasant homelike air about it this evening: the soft lamp-light fell on the grey damask and delicately stencilled walls, Kiddle-a-wink was stretched on the white rug, a work-basket stood open on Honor's little table, and some lacework lay where it had been thrown down weeks ago; a riding-whip and gauntlet were beside it. A look of pain crossed Guy Chichester's face as he noted these little tokens of Honor's presence, and then he threw his arms across the back of the low velvet lounging-chair, and buried his face on them.

Heaven knows what bitter thoughts were surging up in the man's mind as his head sank despondingly on his folded arms. Regret for the past mingling with fears for the future; intolerable longings, remorse for a wasted life, for talents frittered away, for opportunities lost, for faults that had blasted so fair a promise, blended with rebellion against Fate, that had robbed him of his heart's desire.

"I nearly lost her," was his inward groan. "She was right, and what good would my life have been to me—what good is it now? I am weary of this struggle; of what avail is my manhood? I cannot bear this state of things much longer; it is maddening." The broad shoulders heaved with the impatient sigh. "Fool!" he went on, "weak, unmanly, to think I can hardly master myself in her presence. One of these days I must rise against this soft tyranny; one of these days I must tell her that she must be my wife or nothing to me. Nothing! As though I could blot her out of my life—as though I could endure existence without her! Friendship! the very thought is oppressive—a mere mockery, O Honor, I may have sinned, but at least you will have to answer for these wasted embittered years." A stifled sigh seemed to echo the unspoken reproach—a soft sweep of drapery came nearer and nearer.

"Guy!" It scarcely needed that whispered monosyllable to bring Guy Chichester back to the present again, for the hand whose touch had always thrilled through his man's pulses was lying lightly on his arm; but the brown bearded face was only lifted for a moment. She could feel the electric shock that ran through him.

"O Honor, Honor!"

She kept her steady hand on his arm, but her voice shook in its sweetness.

"Dear Guy, look again; it is your old Honor."

"But so changed, so pitiably changed! Honor, the girl was right; I might have lost you."

"True, dear friend."

He raised his head, and drew her towards him with a fond peremptory movement, but for once there was no resistance. She stood with her head a little drooping and eyes downcast, as his keen glance noted the ravages that disease had made in her beautiful face and figure; evidently he was unprepared for the change, for he relaxed his hold with a sudden groan.

Her clear wistful eyes questioned him, and then a fear seized her; she grew paler, and pressed her hand to her side. "Guy, you frighten me. Am I such a wreck?" For the poor soul feared that her beauty had faded. What if sickness had robbed her of her charms, and she no longer found favour in his eyes?

But in his pain he misunderstood her.

"It would not have been fair. Death had no right to deprive me of my treasure before it had come into my keeping," he said almost savagely. The old Berserk spirit kindled in his eye, the man seemed defying his fate.

"I wanted to live. Oh, it seemed too dreadful to die!" she murmured, pressing nearer to him. Another time she would have rebuked his bitterness; now her weakness and her need of him were so great that she could not refrain from a pang that he did not open his arms, and take her into them who had been given to him back from death; as though in his reverence he would have touched a hair of her head unless she had suffered him!

Had he forgotten that only a little while ago he had prayed her to have mercy upon him, for

that his trouble was greater than he could bear, and she had said him nay? How could he know that during these long years she had proved him, and that she was willing—ay, ready—to trust him now? Already the sullen gloom on his brow was infecting her with a new terror. Was she so changed—pitiably changed, as he said? Was it this that was clouding his thankfulness, and making him so unlike himself? Honor's limbs trembled, her woman's nature had received a shock, the light died out of the beautiful eyes.

"Guy, I cannot bear this. What makes you so strange to me?"

He drew his hand before his eyes, and then his voice changed; he answered her with feigned cheerfulness.

"To be sure, I have no right to be making you as dreary as myself. I ought to be thankful, I am thankful, that you are spared, though it may not be for me; but one grows so heart-sick sometimes. But you cannot help that, can you, dear?"

"Guy, how can you misunderstand me so!"

"Am I misunderstanding you, my poor Honor? How pale you look, and I am keeping you standing! Sit down, dear."

"Not now." Yet Honor's limbs could hardly support their weight; she leant heavily against the chair, steadying herself with hands that had begun to tremble. Why did he not look at her?—yet his voice was kind.

"You sent for me," speaking hurriedly, as though he had suddenly remembered something; "you must not make me lose my train."

"O Guy, must you go, and to-night?"

"Elliott says there is no need——"

"Then stay," interrupted Honor.

"Stay—why?" he repeated, looking at her in surprise. "You are the last person, are you not, to tell me to neglect my duty?"

"Your duty!—ah, yes. But may it not be here?" But again he misunderstood her.

"You are a good woman, Honor, you mean it for the best, but this must cease. Hush!" as she tried to interpose a word; "I did not mean to tell you this to-night—not to-night."

"What is it you have to tell me, Guy?" and Honor's voice grew faint. He was trying her cruelly, but she had no strength with which to answer him.

"I have been thinking it over—No, there is no time to-night, you are not well enough, and it seems ungrateful after you have been brought back from death. You do not think me unkind, do you, Honor?"

"No, Guy;" but there was a ring of despair in her voice.

"You are so true a friend—you mean so well by me; but once for all you must understand that a man's nature is not always under his control. This friendship between us is mockery. I —What ails you, dear?"

"O Guy, my heart is breaking! Guy! Guy!"

At the cry of anguish from the woman he loved Guy Chichester turned pale, and involuntarily opened his arms, but the next moment they dropped to his side.

"I forgot; I have no right," he muttered.

Honor tottered back into a seat and covered her face with her hands; and tears, the bitterest she had ever shed, dropped slowly through her wasted fingers. Had she come back to him through the valley of the shadow of death for this?

But the next moment he sprang to her side.

"Anything but that," he cried in a voice hoarse with emotion. "Honor, it shall be as you wish. I would rather die than you should shed a single tear. Keep me by you if you will; when it grows too hard I will go away, as I have gone away before. O my darling, my darling! I never meant to hurt you like this."

She looked up in his face and smiled—how sadly!—through her tears. "O Guy, am I that still?"

"Are you what, my darling? God help me, Honor, but I think you grow dearer to me every day I live. Ever since the first hour I saw you you have been the only woman in the world to me—my heaviest curse and my dearest blessing."

"And you love me still?"

With quick revulsion he left her side and began pacing the room.

"Have I deserved this doubt? I thought you perfect, Honor; but you have no right to test your power like this;" and then, as though afraid of his vehemence, "Do you remember how you clung to me that night? I could see your hands waving out to me in the darkness ever so

far away; will you ever cling to me again?" He stopped and looked at the fair bowed face with intense yearning, and his voice grew low and passionate. "O Honor, if it be for the last time, for the sake of the dear old days, kiss me once again, and bid God bless me before I go; for to-night I feel like a Cain branded with the thought of some lost paradise."

Under the sheltering hands the pale face grew radiant. What were the words that seemed echoing down deep in her heart? "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."

"Guy, come here;" and as he leant over her she lifted up her face, flushed with brilliant colour, and kissed him, and then laid her head on his breast.

"God bless you, dear! O my dear, my dear, you have nearly broken my heart; but I understand it now. You must never leave me again, Guy, for," in a whisper, "I cannot do without you."

Crowned indeed! Had it come to him at last?—the prize he had won and lost, and which he had been striving to regain all these weary years. Was the seed he had sown in bitterness to bring forth a fair harvest?

"My God, I am not worthy," were the only words that came to him in that moment of culminating joy, when the woman he had wooed for so many years came to him and laid her noble head on his breast, and he could feel the beating of the pure heart against his own.

"My love, my love!" was all he said; but

the tightening of the strong arms about her, the murmured blessing from the lips that rested upon the bright hair, spoke volumes, and holding her to him in that long silent embrace, Guy Chichester thanked God and took courage.

"Honor, are you sure you trust me now?"

They were sitting together side by side. Honor looked a little spent and weary with happiness, but the tender shining of her eyes and the varying colour on her face made her so like the "Honor bright" of the old days, that Guy Chichester could almost have thought that the long bitterness was a dream, and that they had never been parted.

"It was in this room, do you remember, Honor, that you gave me back this?" and he opened a little case and showed her the diamond hoop. "I have carried it about with me ever since. I hardly dared to hope its owner would wear it again."

She looked at him with her old beautiful smile, but it deepened into gravity as the diamonds slipped into their old place, and Guy took hand and ring into his keeping.

"Six years ago, in this dear old room, you promised to be my wife. We have gone through a good deal since then. You will not keep me long waiting, will you, dear?"

"No, Guy."

"You will soon come to me?"

"Whenever you wish it," was the quiet answer.

There was something almost solemn in this

second betrothal. Guy Chichester was the first to break the silence.

"And you can really trust me now?"

"Fully and entirely. I see now that I was wrong to doubt you, Guy. I believe, after all, that we were both to blame."

"For what, love?"

"For all these wasted unhappy years, when we might have been together. No, don't stop me, dear. If you only knew how I have longed to ask your forgiveness!"

"Mine? You must be jesting, Honor."

She smiled and shook her head.

"No; I have been wrong too. I have been harsh and ungenerous. Your mother was right when she said I loved my own will too much to make you happy; and yet no woman was ever prouder of her lover than I was of you, Guy."

"You were always too good to me. I will not have you reproach yourself like this. But for my cursed temper, you would have been my wife long ago."

She sighed, and he could feel the hand he held trembled slightly.

"Do you know the thought that haunted me most in my illness? It was remorse that I had not loved you well enough. Yes, indeed," as Guy uttered an incredulous exclamation, "'Perfect love casteth out fear.' My love was imperfect while I feared to trust you."

"You knew me too well; it was all my fault, all my fault."

"You say that to comfort me, but indeed I

was hard on myself as well as you. Do you remember that day when I interceded for Stewart? I was nearly yielding then."

"Nearly, but not quite."

"No; the old fear still remained. I had heard all about your noble work then, Guy; and when you prayed me to come to you, such a longing constrained me that I could have cast myself into your arms, if you had only been less stern with me. When I thought that I should die, and that you would never know how I loved you, I felt as though my heart were breaking."

"Hush, dear! you must not grow pale over these memories. How could you fear me, when you knew I worshipped the ground you walked upon?"

"Ah, it is all over and gone! Now I shall never doubt you again—never, Guy;" then looking at him with all her soul in her eyes, "You must not do all the worship."

"Why not?" stooping over her and kissing the broad white forehead.

"You must leave a little of that to me."

Guy Chichester did not go to London that night. Just before midnight he and Kelpie made their appearance in the library at Ingleside, startling William Elliott from a fireside meditation.

The clergyman dropped his hand wearily from his forehead as Kelpie rushed in with his rousing bark, and began describing circles on the rug. Guy thrust his hands in his pockets and whistled nonchalantly as he took his usual lounging atti-

tude against the mantelpiece. Will's look of astonishment baffled description.

"What, you have not gone after all, or has the train broken down?"

"Not to my knowledge. A man is allowed to change his mind, I suppose. Latimer's cubs may take care of themselves. My days at St. Luke's are over."

Will stared at him. Then he put on his spectacles and regarded him fixedly for a minute, took them off again, and said, "Oh!"

Guy Chichester stroked his beard with a conscious air.

"I have not hurt your feelings, have I, Elliott?"

"Not at all."

"It is not good to be neglectful of one's own parish."

"True."

"Kentish Town may be a stronghold of the Philistines, but there may be heathens very near one's hearth. My head gardener Crouch has a strong savour of Calvinistic doctrine about him. He told me the other day that he knew he was predestined to eternal torment. I ought to have it out with him. Charity begins at home, eh?"

"I don't know. I think it too often stops there," growled Will, who for once chose to be in a perverse humour.

"You parsons can be aggravating enough sometimes. Why cannot you be more tender over a returning prodigal? It is better by far to talk to old Humphrey; he would not hedge up

a man's good resolutions in the way you are doing."

"Humph! it is never too late to mend. So you are going to reform, are you, Squire? Have you found a cure for your restlessness?"

"I have a great mind to keep my own counsel, to punish you for your irony."

"Why do you disappoint a man's expectations, then? I thought you were going to be a second Mungo Park, or Captain Cook at least; that you would discover some inaccessible mountain or navigate some untraversable lake. Who quenches the godlike spirit of enterprise within you? Ha, ha! Prometheus chained! Guy Chichester buried in the Happy Valley!"

Mr. Chichester smiled grimly.

"By the fates, you try my patience too far. Is that all your priestcraft can do for a repentant sinner, terrify him with a nightmare of vultures? To the winds with such sorry prophecies! I have a whole Arcadia framed and glazed in my mind's eye."

"Pipe on, then, to a chorus of Phyllises and Corydons," muttered Will drowsily.

But Guy Chichester was too much in earnest to heed his satire.

"I have asked too much of life. After all, a man has only to limit his desires to reap content. I don't think that my notions are Utopian, after all."

"That depends on common sense being one of the ingredients," was the somewhat uncivil answer. But Mr. Chichester went on undaunted by the sarcasm.

"If we were all to add up our sins, I suppose the sum-total would scare a few of us. Don't you think our sins of omission would swell the balance awfully?"

"Where are you drifting now? Rather a wide margin, from Pan's pipes to original sin."

"I am only repeating my *Miserere.* I do not think I ever realized before my responsibility as a landed proprietor. I must tell you seriously what I think of doing. I shall settle down in earnest; take Humphrey's advice, work the home farm; build that batch of cottages he is always worrying me to begin; enclose more of the common-land; and see if I can make half as good a landlord and country gentleman as my father did."

"Amen, and all honour to Miss Nethecote."

Guy started and turned red.

"Who told you? I mean, how did you guess it?"

"Do you think it needed any telling when one could look at your face? There, let us cease this fencing. I congratulate you with my whole heart;" and as Will held out his hand Guy Chichester caught it and wrung it fervently.

"You are a good fellow, Elliott. God bless you! She has told me all about it, and how you stood my friend; and I am happier than I have ever been in my life. And, Elliott, is she not an angel?"

"She is what is better still, a pure loving woman. Will you take it amiss if I say a word to you?"

"Of course not."

"Heaven is granting you a treasure. You have lost it once; be careful how you guard it for the future."

"You have every right to say this to me," returned Guy impatiently; "but do you think such advice is needful? I have suffered too much to peril my happiness again."

"He that thinketh he standeth," repeated Will solemnly. "Forgive me if I seem to be preaching; but I do not believe that any earthly motive—any affection, however strong—can avail us in an hour of temptation. Sometimes when I look at you I tremble, for you seem to stand alone."

"My good angel will always be near me," replied Guy Chichester softly.

"They are always near us," returned Will with a sigh, "mine as well as yours; and yet we have our falls sometimes. When our hands are down, the Amalekites prevail; when we least expect it, our Philistines are upon us."

"I am not worthy of her; I feel that."

"She would love you if you were ten times as unworthy. I only want you to prove your armour. You see, I am claiming my rights of friendship in speaking so openly. Well, and so your days at St. Luke's are over?"

"Yes, thank Heaven; but I hope to be a good friend to it still. What do you think Honor says? That some day I must take her to see all our old haunts."

"It is like her goodness. Yes; I hope you will both come."

"I shall bring my wife to see you. O Elliott, does it not seem strange to think the old lonely life is passed away like some bad dream—the restlessness and fever gone, and love, work, reality, replacing it? Honor has such a large heart; if I let her she will be the good lady of St. Luke's as well as of our village."

"You must not leave us entirely; I can ill spare you," returned Will with some emotion. "I love to think of those old days, when you came over and helped us."

"Poor Elliott! I always said the work was too hard for you. Your sister little knew you were on the brink of illness when I fetched you away. But these two months' rest will set you up, eh?"

"Yes, I am getting well and hearty again; but I doubt if this idleness agrees with me. I feel restless out of the traces."

"Nonsense! By-the-bye, Elliott, I have something to ask you. What is your opinion of Latimer?"

"Of your cousin, do you mean?"

"Ay, the marble priest, as that little piece of wickedness calls him. How do you and he pull together?"

"Fairly well. I think you all underrate him."

"Ah, you think he has a conscience under that stiff mask of his?"

"A very sensitive one."

"Well, Lat's a good fellow, if Kate were not too much for him. You are better off without a helpmeet."

Will winced. His friend's words touched a sore place. In his younger days he had had pleasant visions of a happy home and wife and children, before poverty and his infirmities had debarred him of this hope. His was a nature keenly alive to the pain of loneliness and want of sympathy, though few guessed what the renunciation had cost him. Silent and many were the victories that his quiet endurance won. Stern only with himself, he was uniformly gentle with others; and he had learned not only to sympathize with the sad and suffering, but, what was far harder, to rejoice in their joy.

For one moment something like bitterness crossed his mind as he contrasted himself with his friend: the one revelling in health, strength, full of vigour, rich in intellect, laden with the good things of this world, blessed with the possession of a loving heart; the other, young, yet strangely conversant with pain, bound by infirmity, an object of pity even to those who reverenced him, his great intellect earning for him the merest pittance, his hearth cold and lonely, no woman's face within his home, no child to come creeping about his knees.

But as though he felt the cold touch of some demon, he shook off his sadness with gentle sarcasm.

"You are wrong. I have a grimmer helpmeet than your cousin. Long years ago I wooed her, and she came to me. She keeps my hearth clean, but not warm; her embraces are as chaste as snow and as cold as ice."

Mr. Chichester made a grimace.

"If I read your riddle aright, Elliott, I should sue for a divorce."

"For shame! I will not have you deride my mistress! You only see her homely features; she keeps all her beauties for me. No, I have honestly won her, and shall keep her till death."

"Mark my words! In a few months you will change her for a richer bride."

"Rank heresy! What! abjure poverty?"

"Moderate wealth would add to your means of doing good."

"I prefer my present stewardship. What can be nobler work than the cure of souls?"

"Pooh! there are souls as valuable to be saved up here. Did I not tell you about my gardener Crouch? Would you have the poor man spend his life in terror of eternal perdition? He has worsted Latimer in an argument already."

"My dear Chichester, what have I to do with Mr. Fortescue, or Crouch either?"

"You may have plenty to do with both if you will. You have given me advice, and I shall take the liberty of repaying it with interest. There are stronger men needed at St. Luke's."

"Granted; but where could you find one more willing? St. Luke's is my life."

"Lythe is the very man for it."

"My work is as necessary to me as your love is to you."

"An ill matched comparison! I say Lythe is the man."

Will was silent.

"My dear fellow, I have arranged it all with Latimer. He has his faults, I allow: he is confoundedly proud, but he is a very jewel of a vicar. He will leave you to all your vagaries." And as Will looked mystified, he repeated, "I tell you, I have settled it all with him."

"I am quite as much in the dark as ever."

Mr. Chichester gave one of his hearty laughs.

"To be sure. I have never explained myself. Well, I don't know whether it is Kate's fancies, or whether Latimer is really delicate on the chest; anyhow, my mother, Grey, and Kate have imagined it between them, and Latimer is to spend the next two or three winters at Mentone. Some one has offered him a chaplaincy there."

"I really think he is delicate."

"I suspect it is a bit of over-caution—a bit of remorse on my lady's part for nearly worrying him into an early grave; or most likely she finds the Vicarage dull as well as damp in the winter: these dark-eyed women are so artful."

"You are too hard on Mrs. Fortescue. I think her a charming person."

"My dear fellow, your charity is so universal that I believe you would extend it to Medusa herself. You would ask her so prettily to avert her death-darting glances, that her Gorgon soul would be charmed. If there is anything I detest, it is charity."

Will smiled resignedly.

"Charitable people are so slow. If everybody were to agree with you, the world would

not be worth living in. Depend upon it, Adam and Eve were dreadfully tired of each other before Eve conceived the brilliant idea of eating the apple."

"Do you know you would shock any one who did not know you as well as I do?"

"Kate's name always rankles. I believe I hate that woman; she is sheer humbug, and Lat believes in her. So you like my lady, eh?"

"She has been very good-natured to me. Dym rather dislikes her, I believe."

"Bravo, Miss Dym! Well, Latimer being off duty half the year, it is quite indispensable to have a good resident curate, who can take charge of the parish in the vicar's absence. The work is light, the pay good as such things go—two hundred and fifty, and lodgings found, I believe Latimer said."

"Indeed, is it usual in these northern parishes for the Squire to add another hundred to the curate's stipend?"

Mr. Chichester looked disconcerted.

"A hundred and fifty being nearer the mark."

"What makes you so sharp to-night? I suppose I may do as I like in my own parish?"

"Indeed, are you the lay-rector?"

"No, I am not, Mr. Elliott; but Birstwith belongs to me, and I do not choose the curate of my church, which my father built, to be paid less well than my butler or head gardener."

"I think you are right," returned Will sadly, hanging his head.

"If you will undertake this charge, the two

hundred and fifty a year will be yours; if you refuse, it will go to another man."

"I trust you will find one to your liking," replied Will gently.

"What! you decline?"

"I fear I must do so."

"You call me your friend, and refuse the first favour I have ever asked you! Do you know I have set my heart upon this?"

"It grieves me to be obliged to disappoint you, but I cannot leave St. Luke's."

"Tut, man! your reasons?"

"I have given them."

"None that I recognise as such. Do be reasonable, Elliott, and look at this in a sober matter-of-fact way. Does not common sense tell you you are not the man for a dense over-populated parish like that?"

"I am not much to look at, certainly," returned Will with a faint smile; "but I am young to be superannuated and set down to do nothing in a country village. Hitherto my strength has been like the widow's cruse, it has never failed me."

"Don't boast, it may give way to-morrow. Do I not know what work at St. Luke's means? I hate to think of you in those close squalid streets."

"Such as it is, it is the very breath of my life. Take me away from St. Luke's and I am nothing."

"You used not to say so."

"No; six months ago I should have thought

differently. I have learnt to know myself and St. Luke's better now. Don't ask me to leave my people."

Mr. Chichester walked up and down the room hurriedly.

"Such Quixotic nonsense, such a lamentable want of common sense!" he muttered. "I have set my heart on this. We want you near us. It would have pleased Honor—I know it would. She always says our drowsy parish wants waking up. You are just the one to rouse us."

"You are very good, but I am not what you think me," murmured poor Will.

"What do you care what we think of you?" returned Guy testily. "Just when I want to make every one as happy as I am—not that that is possible," he added hastily. "I always thought it was your wish to provide a home for your sister; but now the opportunity has come you shrink from it."

"You tempt me sorely," returned Will in an agitated voice. "If it were for her good—but no, I cannot reconcile it to my sense of duty. Mr. Benedict is getting old. I have become almost like a son to him. He has just stinted himself to add another fifty pounds to my salary. You are wrong when you pity me. I have more than a sufficiency for my needs."

"But your sister," interrupted Mr. Chichester. "Why don't you include her in your list of duties, past, present, and to come?"

"Do you think I have forgotten her? Poor little Dym! No; I am not quite so selfish

as that. It is partly for her sake that I refuse."

"Your reasons?" again demanded Guy.

"Pardon me if I keep some of them to myself," returned Will with a look of pain. His friend's generous persistence distressed him beyond measure. "Probably if you had offered me this last spring, when Dym was with me, I should have accepted it joyfully. I think now that it is better that she should continue independent of me."

"Why so? Her brother is her natural protector. I do not yet know Honor's wishes, but if she leave us would you turn her on the world again?"

"No, no. Ah, how you harass my resolution! It is hard enough to do one's duty; but if there be a doubt which is one's duty! Give me a few days to think over this. I will speak to Dym herself."

"Do so by all means," returned Guy, joyfully, who took this hesitation for victory. "I have not a doubt of what Miss Elliott will say."

"After all she is my first duty," muttered Will, passing his hand weariedly over his brow. His manner startled Mr. Chichester, and he looked at him more keenly than he had done yet.

"I wish I could sound all your reasons," he said abruptly. "There is something behind all this. Well, I suppose it would be no use if I talked till cock-crowing."

"It will be that soon," replied Will with a

strange smile. "Ah, well, you were too happy, and I was too thoughtful to sleep. Good night, Chichester. You wont bear me malice if my conscience falls foul of your wishes?"

"Confound all consciences!" was the somewhat gruff answer. "The worst is, the more a man plagues you and tramples on your pet prejudices, the better you are sure to like him."

"And you will forgive me if I disappoint you?" asked Will, holding out his thin hand. How white and fragile it looked beside Guy's strong brown one!

"I can forgive you anything but being such a saint," returned Mr. Chichester in his whimsical way. "There, God bless you, old fellow. I am happy enough to forgive the whole world, and even myself."

CHAPTER IX.

SUNSHINE AND SHADOW.

THE two friends parted, but not to sleep. Guy's happiness kept him restless. He would have liked to have sat till morning descanting on the manifold perfections of his betrothed; he had kept Will a full hour after the last "good-night" had been said, listening to his animated plans for the future; but the worn, weary look on Will's face at last warned him to desist, and to tax no longer his sympathizing patience.

Strong excitement always stimulated Guy Chichester like new wine; sleep would not come at his bidding. Honor's sweet looks, her words, her few precious caresses, haunted the happy lover; and though his waking dreams at last terminated in a brief nap, he sprang up long before it was light, and summoning his faithful companion Kelpie, set out for one of his interminable walks over hill and dale.

Will, on the contrary, lay open-eyed and anxious long after the darkness had passed into twilight, and twilight into the grey dawning of another day.

Such nights were not new to him. Often and often he had risen from his couch and trimmed the midnight lamp, to relieve bodily uneasiness and induce slumber by hard mental labour. In the darkest hours of his pain such wisdom and strength would come to him, that they who saw his pale face radiant with some secret joy would marvel at the triumph of the soul over so frail a body.

While others slept, none saw him kneeling, sometimes for hours, before his open Bible; none knew of the strong cries for help that went up to heaven—of the bitter conflicts that were fought by one poor priest, whom men pitied; none knew the loneliness of the great heart which was learning every day to know its own weakness more—a heart that had chosen for itself poverty, and the company of Christ's poor, that asked nothing for itself but to spend and be spent in its Lord's service.

And yet there were times when William Elliott reproached himself for unfaithfulness, when his soul was torn by a sense of unfitness and neglect of duty, when his measure of strength seemed small, when he looked for help and found none. Great souls have these crises; it is the refined metal that goes down into the furnace.

Sometimes in our greatest need the sun goes down, and to us there is no Gibeon, no valley of Ajalon; our hosts are fighting rank against rank, good against evil, but it is in utter darkness. What false charges we make, what losses, what bloodshed! our reserve forces are of no avail;

our advance, our rearguard are wounded; where are the standards—which side sends forth the note of victory? Light! light! is all we ask, and shall that be denied?

Could we ourselves feel the force of the temptation that precedes a fall, I think there would be an end to harsh judgment. Many a one fights valiantly for a time, who at the last is overborne to the ground by a sudden charge. Happy those who, though mortally wounded, can rise and fight on!

A terrible anxiety was racking the heart and brain of William Elliott when the grey morning broke and found him watching.

Now and then the steady flow of argument was broken by disconnected recollections.

"Just like him," he thought, "to remember others in the first hour of his happiness; another man would have wrapped himself in pardonable egotism at such a time. What a grand whimsical nature it is!—generous, yet as simple as a child. Was it wrong of me to warn him? A man cannot quite outlive his passions; and she—all women are so sensitive. Why, even I, though I love him dearly, I think we should be better friends apart. His will is so strong, that it would almost constrain people to sacrifice their conscience, at least in trifles."

He pondered again, and then broke into a fresh channel: "Only to know what is right—my poor little Dym! And yet it would be cruel kindness. I have had my warning, a double one. 'Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther,' seems written up

against me if I take this path. A little while ago, and I should have hailed this offer as a godsend; rest, study, friendship—what more could I ask of life? But now I should soon score underneath them idleness, vacuum, soul-weariness. I am not what I was; this northern air is deleterious to my moral nature. Oh, for the safety of the traces again! Shall I venture it for Dym's sake? No, no; I will go back to my old work, though I break down under it."

His right hand clenched itself as it lay on the coverlid, the secret workings of some strong emotion made the cold sweat stand on his forehead. Had he found a lion in his path, that the whole man seemed girding himself up to do battle? "My God, judge Thou the right, for my wisdom has become foolishness to me," he prayed; but still the old argument went on.

"Shall I do evil that good may come? Will it be evil if I do it for my child's sake—she is so young and weak? Will it not be cowardly to shrink from this new work? And yet, if what I fear should happen, would it not have been best to have taught her to depend on her own resources, rather than on so sorry a protector? Poor little Dym! and yet it would make her so happy."

And then a sudden weariness came upon him. "I will wait a few days, and then I will speak to Dym," he said to himself. "Woman's instinct is often wiser than man's reason; perhaps when we discuss it together, I may be better able to judge than I am now." And then he slept.

It was the grey dawn of another day when a strange dream came to him. Falling asleep, a sudden remembrance flashed across him of a childish speech Dym had once made to him. Memory plays us these tricks sometimes: mere trifles come to the recollection of dreaming men, they say, and often in that dim borderland between waking and sleep some vivid image of past days will suddenly arise and startle us.

And so it was that Will drowsily bethought himself of a certain deep hanging lane, full of red ruts and sweet with blackberry thickets, where once, many years ago, he had walked with his little sister.

She was a dark-eyed child then, and he remembered how he had to stoop for her chubby hands to clasp his arm. By-and-bye they had sat down on a stile to rest, and he had gathered her a great bunch of rowan-berries.

"You are my king, Will Conqueror, and this shall be your sceptre," she had said, pushing the crimson glory into his hand.

"A poor king, my pet."

Dym played with the mountain-ash thoughtfully.

"Will, when you grow up, I wonder what sort of man you will be?"

"What sort? Why, you silly child, like other men, I suppose."

"Oh, no, no!" replied the child earnestly, "not like other men, Will; you have a look on your face which reminds me of those men in red and blue in the painted window at church."

"Hush, little profanity; those are saints and martyrs."

"Why don't you be a saint and martyr too, dear? and then when you are dead they will put a glory round your head. Wouldn't you like a glory better than anything, Will?"

"I should like to smell blackberries again," muttered Will, dreamily. Where was he? There was the deep rutty lane again, the rowan-trees, and the trail of honeysuckle, but no chubby child's hands met over his arm, no sweet child's face lifted itself in the sunshine.

He sat himself down on the old stile; some birds sang from the nut-copse, a white butterfly glanced hither and thither; the stillness oppressed him, the green gloom of the overhanging trees, the unchanging sunshine; he felt heart-sick, overwhelmed with sadness. Suddenly, by some strange instinct, he knew he was not alone: some unseen power seemed to root him to the spot; he could not look round, and yet he felt impelled to speak.

"Where is the child?" he asked.

"She is a child no longer," responded a voice behind him; "children seldom weep. Do you know me?"

"I know your voice. Don't let me see your eyes, they would frighten me; men cannot look on angels."

"Am I an angel, then?

"I will hold your white robe tightly—so. No, you must not leave me. I have lost my

way; if you be woman as well as spirit, show me my place."

"Learn wisdom from a child's lips. Look for it among the noble army of martyrs."

"Was she right, then—will they put a glory round my head?"

"Peace, poor soul! there is no glory needed but His; take this." The robe slipped from his nerveless fingers, he was alone. On the ground lay a cross, heavy and spiked with iron; a blood red cluster of rowan berries lay upon it.

And the voice! Waking up, Will fell on his knees and stretched out his trembling hands, for he knew that he had entered into the cloud.

"Have you seen Guy this morning?" was Mrs. Chichester's first question, as Will entered the breakfast-room; "Dorothy tells me he has not gone up to London after all."

"It was not necessary, he thought better of it," returned Will hesitatingly; he was not sure how far he might trench on his friend's confidence. As he took his seat opposite to his hostess, Mrs. Chichester's eyes, dim as they were, were struck by the young clergyman's paleness.

"You do not take care of yourself, my dear Mr. Elliott; you let Guy keep you up too late at nights."

"It was my own fault," returned Will mildly; "he surprised me in a fireside meditation when he came in from the Cottage."

"What, did he go over to the Cottage again

last night?" Mrs. Chichester's tone had a trifle of displeasure in it.

Will wisely held his peace.

"It is time for me to put in an appearance when you cross-examine my friend in my absence, mother," exclaimed her son gaily, as he and Kelpie entered at that moment, bringing plenty of fresh air with them.

"Why, how you startle one, Guy!" remonstrated his mother, half laughing. "When are you and Kelpie going to leave off your vagabond ways? Put back your hair, you foolish fellow; have you been walking bareheaded in this wind?"

"Wind! I scarcely felt a breath of air. Faugh! you feel like hot-house plants here," as Will shivered at the opening door. "Give me some coffee, *madre,* please. I am afraid I am unromantic enough to state I have an enormous appetite this morning."

Mrs. Chichester looked fondly at her son as her hands were busy among the cups and saucers. "How well, how handsome he looked!" she thought; "other men were not to compare with him." Perhaps her maternal eyes were partial. Guy Chichester's face was too irregular and strong-featured to be called handsome, but it was a goodly face enough for all that, bronzed and ruddy with health, his keen eyes sparkling with animation, and the curly head and beard looking none the worse for being dishevelled by the wind. Mr. Chichester ran his hand carelessly through them as he was

bid. "I hope you got more sleep than I did, Elliott. Mother, look at him; he has a headache."

"Nothing to mention," returned Will, his pale face flushing a little. "I think, as I have already breakfasted, that I will go to the library and write some letters; that is, if Mrs. Chichester will excuse me."

"Do so, by all means, and then you will be ready to walk over to the Cottage presently."

Mrs. Chichester waited till Mr. Elliott had left the room, and then she turned to her son.

"You almost live at the Cottage, Guy; now Honor is better, don't you think it would be as well to cease such frequent visits? It sets people talking, and it is all no use."

Guy Chichester pushed away his plate and walked to the window; he was obviously at a loss how to reply.

"I know you do not like advice on this subject, but you ought to see for yourself that Honor disapproves of it. She has seen Mr. Elliott several times, but she has never yet been well enough to admit you."

"On the contrary, I saw her last night."

Mrs. Chichester looked aggrieved.

"You might have told me so before, Guy."

Guy whistled softly, and took another turn across the room. By-and-bye he stopped.

"Mother, should you be glad if I brought you a visitor?"

"That depends upon whom it is. What, you don't mean to say Dr. Grey will let Miss Elliott

come home? Oh, Guy, I shall be so delighted to get her back."

"Miss Elliott, always Miss Elliott!" returned Guy impatiently. "How fond you are of that little thing, mother! Have her back, by all means, if the doctor will let you. Not but what you are right, and she is a dear little creature," he added, repenting of his momentary roughness. "But I was not speaking of her. Mother, may I bring Honor?"

His tone was so peculiar, that Mrs. Chichester looked up into his face quite startled, and what she saw there made her cast her arms about his neck.

"Oh, Guy, my dear, dear boy! has it come right at last?"

"At last, mother."

"Thank God for it! I have wished it; you know I have wished and prayed for it, Guy."

"I believe you have, mother."

"It has come to this, that I have been driven to wish my own son were lost to me; if I did not love you better than myself, I should be a miserable woman now."

"Nay, I hope not, *mère chérie*."

"Do you think a mother is happy when she loses her only son? You are my boy—my boy with my husband's eyes—and I must give you up to Honor."

"I can belong to my wife and to my mother too."

"Mothers are strange things. Forgive me, Guy, I am a jealous old woman; but you were

my only one, and I have made you my idol. God has punished me for it by giving us all this misery. But you are going to be happy now, my dear. We shall all be happier, shall we not?"

She took her son's hand and kissed it. Guy's heart smote him as he looked down on this fond faithful creature. "He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." Had he been all to her that he ought to have been? Had he not left her to her loneliness, distressed her with his strange humours, burdened her with his sorrows, and had she ever reproached him? Since his boyhood she had been his gentle companion; the beautiful young mother he remembered singing lullabies over his infant cot had become to him the loving friend of his manhood. He was a man when she had come to him and wept out her widowed tears on his breast. How she had clung to him! With what fond words, with what sacred tears, she had prayed her boy to comfort her! And yet had there not been times when her very love had wearied him—when his pride had chafed under those soft exactions—when he could have wished those silken bonds could have held him no longer? How her jealousy had fretted him! He had revolted against the sweet tyranny of her monopoly—his mind had larger needs than those of which her woman's soul had dreamed. The widow would have kept her son to herself, but what had he become?—a wanderer, a citizen of the world, a voluntary exile. A disappointed

love had been her rival; a woman's fair face had come between her son and happiness, and had made discord in their quiet home.

She had taught herself to wish that Honor Nethecote would be his wife; but could she—would she ever be able to love her? The daughter-in-law she had imagined for herself was some soft clinging creature, whom she could have petted and patronized—some one like Dym Elliott, for example, only with Honor's beauty. Would Honor ever come into her heart of hearts, and be a daughter to her? How coldly she had ever borne herself to Guy's mother! There had been no lack of gentleness, perhaps; but the pride, the chilling reserve of her manner, the quiet unchanging rebuke for the distrust that had come between them. Yes, she had injured Honor; but was it not for the younger and happier woman to forgive such injury? Did not Honor's very superiority and nobleness of nature lead her to such reconciliation? The narrowness, the soft bigotry, the pardonable jealousy, that had weakened Mrs. Chichester's influence with her son were impossible faults with Honor. Her love flowed in broader channels—her generosity feared no rival. Guy might have lavished his affection on a thousand objects, and she would have held her place without a moment's doubt.

A gulf of sadness rolled between this mother and son. These misunderstandings are not rare even between two who love each other; but it may be doubted if the remorse were not heavier

on Guy. All sorts of vague regrets agitated the mind of this singular man, always moved by sudden impulses; his mother's kiss humiliated and abashed him. He could have gone on his knees and asked pardon for all his fitful humours. Good heavens! these mothers have such patience! A thousand, ten thousand times he had wronged her gentleness, and she had borne with him as a very angel might have done. Honor, perfect as she was, had not a tithe of her sweetness and gentleness. What had he done that two such women should love him?

He cast down his eyes and groaned as Mrs. Chichester ventured on her humble caress. Why should she not humble herself before her boy? "We shall all be happier now, shall we not, dear?" she had asked; but Guy had not as yet bethought himself of an answer.

"Guy, shall I come with you this morning, my dear?"

"You, mother!" rousing up from his reverie. "Why, it is for me to bring Honor to you."

"Nay, my dear, I do not think so," replied Mrs. Chichester gently. "Six years ago you brought Honor to me; now it is for me to go to her. These cold winds, too, and she is still an invalid. It is not like your wonted wisdom, Guy."

Guy bent down and kissed her abruptly.

"Mother, you are an angel! Yes, you shall come with me." And then, as though he were afraid of trusting himself to say any more, he went quickly out of the room.

The sound of wheels brought Will out of the library. He looked surprised when he saw Mrs. Chichester ready equipped and leaning on her son's arm.

"Are you coming with us, Mr. Elliott?"

"I think so. Dym will be looking for me; but perhaps I may be in your way," he added hastily, as the reason for this early visit became apparent to him.

Mrs. Chichester smiled graciously.

"My son's friend is never in my way. I am only going to see Honor"—she hesitated slightly, as though words were difficult to her; "Guy will have told you what has happened."

Guy nodded.

"You have my warmest congratulations," was Will's answer, as he treated her to one of his winning smiles. "Your son knows what I think of Miss Nethecote."

"You must reserve your congratulations for Guy," returned Mrs. Chichester, a little sadly. "Do you not remember what the old proverb says about a son marrying?"

"Proverbial philosophy may be at fault sometimes, my dear madam," replied Will earnestly. "I am no true prophet if you do not find it so in this case. You will have a noble daughter-in-law."

Mrs. Chichester was silent. Every one sang Honor's praises; but when would Honor come and put her arms round her neck, and be a daughter to her?

Honor and Dym were sitting together when

Guy's tap was heard at the door. The greeting between the three was a somewhat silent one. Dym was nervous. She thought Guy wanted Honor to himself, and faltered, and almost broke down over the few words she had schooled herself to say to him. Guy saw her embarrassment, and very good-naturedly put an end to it.

"Don't trouble yourself to make a pretty speech, Miss Elllott. I hate congratulations. There, I know exactly what you want to say;" and he patted her hand kindly and turned to his betrothed.

"Honor, my mother is downstairs; she is waiting to see you."

"To see me!" Honor flushed a little, but there was no hesitation in her manner. The visit was evidently unexpected by her. Perhaps in her inmost heart she had wished for a delay; but there was no reluctance in her tone as she said, "We had better go down, then."

But there was a little stateliness in her step as she entered the room, and an exceeding quietness of bearing as Mrs. Chichester came forward to meet her and folded her in her arms.

"My dear Honor! I am so glad of this!"

"It is very kind of you to come and see me, Mrs Chichester: it was for me to come to you."

"I do not think so, Honor."

"Ah, but it was. When Guy told me you were here, I felt sorry that you should have given yourself such trouble. You should have sent for me, and I would have come."

"I wanted to thank you for your goodness to my son."

Honor's head lifted itself a little proudly; but she looked at Guy, and her eyes grew meek instantly.

"For my goodness to myself, you mean," she said, with a soft smile.

Mrs. Chichester looked at her wistfully, and sighed. How lovely she was this morning!—fair enough to gladden any lover's eyes. What mother would not have rejoiced that her son should win for himself such goodness and beauty? And yet Mrs. Chichester sighed.

Honor had placed herself by her side; but already their hands had insensibly fallen asunder. Under her lover's eyes, Miss Nethecote's brief haughtiness had vanished—in her whole mien there was gentleness tempered with reserve; a large benevolence, a chastened joy too deep for words shone in the clear grey eyes.

Words seemed to break up the furrows of her thoughts. Utterance was difficult to her. Not even to Guy's mother could she speak of her happiness. It lay down too deep for mere surface sunshine.

Mrs. Chichester found this silence chilling. She was a demonstrative woman. She liked to express her feelings—to talk out her joy aloud. The "fatted calf," the "coals of fire," were to her goodly interpretations of different phases of life. She liked the outward and visible sign of things. She wanted this woman—so sweet in looks, so silent in tongue—to fall on her neck and

call her mother; and she felt disappointed, almost to injury.

"We must forget all that has gone before, and make a fresh beginning," she said a little sadly, when she had waited for Honor to speak, but Honor had still remained silent. "I trust, my dear, that in your heart you have entirely forgiven me."

"For what?" returned Honor, with a look of surprise. "We have forgiven each other, have we not?" The speech jarred on her. Why should the past be brought up again, she thought, to mar the peace of the present? In the old days Mrs. Chichester had not been good to her; but was it for any one to remember it? "Hush! it is not right to speak of this now," she said, with a touch of peremptoriness; but Mrs. Chichester thought her manner was wanting in graciousness.

"I think you are right, Honor," assented Guy in a low voice. He was holding himself aloof from the two women, watching them anxiously. Was it blame to him if he drew comparisons between them? if, with the omniscience of love, he read Honor's silence aright, and thought his mother's words less beautiful?

"You are so good, Honor, that I know you will feel rightly about this. But I am growing old, my dear: it will make me happier if you will try to love me."

"I will try," returned Honor, simply.

No wonder Mrs. Chichester thought her cold.

The daughter she would have had would have knelt at her feet, and kissed her again and again, on hearing such winning words. No marvel if Honor's truthful "I will try" smote chilly on her heart.

She rose, with a little sense of injury breaking the sweetness of her humour. "I will go to Miss Elliott, now. I daresay Guy wants you to himself for a little while;" and as neither of them dared to controvert the fact that the interview was slightly irksome to all parties, she was not contradicted. Guy moved with some alacrity to the door, and was only just in time to prevent Mrs. Chichester from a hasty stumble over a little carved footstool that stood in her way.

The fall would have been a serious one; and her son felt justified in administering a rebuke.

"Mother, why have you become a foe to all footstools lately? You must remember you are not as young as you used to be, and you ought not to move about so quickly."

"It was very careless of me," returned his mother. She still panted slightly from the shock, and Guy kept his arm round her. From some cause or other she had turned a little pale.

"You are all right again?" he inquired tenderly.

"Yes, dear; let me go now." But he still detained her.

"Wait a moment, mother; there is no hurry

for Miss Elliott. Stewart gave me some letter you had dropped in the carriage. Let me see, where is it?" He dived into his pockets and soon produced it. "Why, it is from Trichy, and I declare the seal still unbroken. Do open it, and let me see what she says about Frank."

"Will it not do presently? I am really in a hurry to get to Miss Elliott. I will tell you all about it at luncheon-time." But Guy chose to be obstinate.

"I would rather hear it now, please."

Mrs. Chichester flushed painfully, and her hand trembled as she broke the seal, and then she handed it to her son. "You may read it for yourself, then, Guy."

"What! before you have looked at it yourself?" he returned in some astonishment. "I don't think Trichy would care for me to read all her letters. Just run over it, and tell me the contents."

Poor Mrs. Chichester! She was hardly mistress of herself in this emergency. She adjusted her gold eyeglasses with a hand that even her son noticed shook visibly. Her nervous agitation attracted Miss Nethecote's notice. She leant forward and watched her steadily, and then her face suddenly grew troubled.

"You used not to be such a slow reader, mother; why, you have not turned the first page yet," observed Guy, who already repented of the delay.

"Beatrix's handwriting is so small and

cramped; you make me nervous, hurrying me so, Guy."

"Small and cramped! Why, I can read that scrawl from here. Let me see. 'Yes; Frank sends his love, and says he will not fail to execute Guy's commission. There is a dress parade to-day, and Captain Stewart and Major Drummond'—turn it over—Why, mother, you have got it upside down!"

Guy's impatient tone did not mend matters.

"I did not know; there is so little light in the room," she faltered.

"So little light!" echoed Guy incredulously, for the spring sunshine was flooding the little room.

Honor rose from her seat and put herself between them.

"Don't, Guy! I will not have her teased. Don't you see"—turning to him with a look of pain—"can you not see what is the matter?"

The poor lady stretched out her hands to her son.

"He does not know. I have tried to keep it from him. Guy, my dear boy, you must not be impatient with your mother. I cannot see well; I am going blind."

"Blind!" Guy started and turned pale. Honor looked pitifully up into his face, as he put her aside, and took his poor mother in his arms. What improbable tale was this she was telling him? He looked at her eyes almost angrily; and then he could not disguise from himself that some film seemed gathering over

their brown brightness. "Blind!" he repeated in a voice of despair. "Oh mother, mother!" The poor fellow could hardly contain himself for pity and horror. His heart, always tender over misfortune, swelled indignantly against this new affliction.

Mrs. Chichester leant her head against his shoulder. The pain of concealment was over; her secret was hers no longer. Her son's arms were round her; she felt almost comforted. She cried a little, it is true; and then yielded herself to the sweetness of the consolation.

Guy's misery was intense. If he had ever cloaked his love under a garb of wilfulness or roughness, it stood revealed now; and he knew that in her helplessness she would be dearer to him than the mother of his youth had been. His sad face touched Honor inexpressibly.

"Dear Guy, this blindness may not be irremediable," she half whispered. But Mrs. Chichester heard her.

"They think it is cataract. It will be partial blindness for a few months, perhaps years, Dr. Garnet says. You must not fret about it, Guy. I shall get used to it; and perhaps in a few years, if I consent to an operation, my sight may be restored to me, if—if——"

"If what, darling mother?"

"If what Dr. Garnet fears does not happen;" and in answer to her son's further questions, she admitted that during the past month or two certain symptoms had occurred that made the doctor hesitate in pronouncing it simple cataract.

There had been a great deal of pain; and she readily acknowledged that the wisest way would be to place herself without delay under an experienced oculist.

"We will go to town at once. Mother, you have acted wrongly in not telling me before. This delay may be fatal."

Mrs. Chichester shook her head.

"No, Guy; if my fears be true, no oculist can do anything for me. Do not distress yourself, dear. The world will not be quite dark to me when you are in it. When it grows very hard you must help me to bear it;" and she stretched out her hands to her son again; but it was not he who caught them and pressed them to his breast.

"Yes, we will help you, Guy and I. Do not cry. You will have two children to love and cherish you. I will work for you, and read to you, and you shall tell me how to comfort you."

Was that Honor kneeling at her feet, with the tears running down her face? Were those Honor's arms wrapped so tenderly about her? Could it be Honor's voice so broken and full of love?

"You are Guy's mother, and you shall be mine too. I did not love my own mother more dearly than I will love you. When Guy brings me home, you will let me be your daughter?"

"My own daughter!" And as Honor dried the dim eyes on her own handkerchief, and kissed the cheek that had grown wan and faded

lately, Mrs. Chichester's head dropped upon that pure bosom, and she whispered, "My God, I thank Thee for this; for whereas I was blind, now I see." And Honor, looking up, read her reward in her lover's eyes.

CHAPTER X.

WILL CASTS IN HIS LOT WITH ST. LUKE'S.

A FEW days after the eventful family gathering at Nidderdale Cottage, Honor and Dym were sitting together, when William Elliott quietly made his appearance.

It was Dym's last day at the Cottage.

On the following afternoon Mrs. Chichester and her son were going up to London, and Honor had consented to accompany them. Will had promised to take his sister to Ingleside, and remain a week with her, and then he would go back to St. Luke's.

On the morrow Humphrey Nethecote would be left alone.

A few days only had passed, but already preparations had been set on foot for the marriage. Neither Guy nor Honor was young: their mutual affection had been proved without a doubt. In this case there was nothing to invite delay; even Humphrey could not raise an objection.

"We have already lost six of our best years," Guy said to his betrothed; "and though I am loth to hurry you, Honor, I think we should not go far into the seventh."

And Honor, who took blame on herself for "that long drawn-out pain," could not find it in her heart to plead for a little delay.

"I will do as you wish," was her simple answer. "When you are ready for me, I will come to you. I am not strong yet, Dr. Grey says, but I grow less weak every day."

"These bleak winds try you," returned Guy fondly. Honor's face still lacked the pure healthy colouring of old. It had always been pale, but now it was almost transparently white, and the eyes were too large and *spirituelle* looking. "The change south will do you good. If we set half the London milliners and dressmakers to work, do you think you can be ready for me by the middle of May?" he added mischievously.

He was a little baffled by the smile that accompanied her answer. Of course she would be ready for him. Had he bidden her, she would have married him in the dress she wore. Such things were valueless in her eyes, except as they pleased him. She would have put her hand in his, and followed him through the world, if he had asked her. Had she not given him her heart—her faithful sorely-tried heart? Was he not her "bosom's lord?" Had she not elected him king in her woman's kingdom, and could she say him nay in a matter of days and seasons?

What had become of the strong will that had dared to assert itself against an imperious lover; that had held itself steadily, with secret anguish, through so many long years? Had trouble wrought this gentleness? Was love making her

meek? Perhaps so; love sometimes works such miracles. But there was no inconsistency in Honor's nature; she was not less strong, but she gave with more generosity. The "man whom her soul delighteth to honour" had vanquished her by his noble love; and this time the woman within her had agreed to a total surrender. Guy secretly marvelled at her gentleness. Was it part of her code of faith that she should never contradict him? Her sweetness often made his heart ache with a dull sad feeling of remorse.

"Are you sure you like this, that you are not doing it to please me?" he would ask her anxiously, when, as usual, she had referred some arrangement to him.

"In pleasing you I am pleasing myself," she returned softly. "These things are of no consequence to me, but I know they will give pleasure to you and to your mother. Indeed, Guy, you must not thank me," as he looked at her with grave wistfulness; "such a labour of love can hardly weary me."

But even then he would hardly be satisfied. Sometimes her submission grieved him: he wanted to be generous too. There were times when his lordly nature would have loved to humble itself before this woman, when he wanted her to feel that she had quelled the demon within him; when, in his chivalrous ardour, he would have donned his armour and gone down into the thickest of the battle to do her bidding. Sometimes there would be a contest between these two generous souls—each wished to give up.

There was still the strife of wills; both wished to be first in self-sacrifice; but it was the man whose vows were loudest, the woman always immolated herself.

I am afraid it is the truth that most women delight in self-sacrifice; they are for ever kneeling in reverence—they resist the hand that raises them. If they are victims, they delight in their garlands. They are ever making ovations and crowning their hero. Bring forward the wreaths of laurel and bay and parsley! They keep all the bitter herbs—the rue, the anise—for themselves. Do you blame them that they weep over empty thrones sometimes? Where is the Ideal? Gone. The Real lies trailing in the dust with dishonoured hairs: the crowns are faded. Where are the fond votaries now? Need you ask?—there on the ground beside them, composing the drapery, covering the sorry wreck with a decent veil, weeping cleansing tears over them, and by-and-bye raising them with weak loving hands, and bringing them back to the right path again.

Dym, who was rather a harsh censor, as most young persons are before the knowledge of their own angles soften those of other people, felt herself a little disappointed in her estimate of Miss Nethecote's character, when she saw the earnestness, and even anxiety, with which she applied herself to the business of the trousseau. She and Mrs. Chichester were from morning to night arranging and descanting on the several shades of colours and the difference of material. Guy used to laugh when he came in to fetch Honor

for a walk or drive, and found them in the thick of an argument between satin and moire-antique. Honor would be sitting with bent brows over a paper list—for all shopping was to be deferred till they got to London—and Mrs. Chichester, oblivious of the knitting in her lap, would be nodding her head and smoothing her dress with soft excited fingers, as one article after another was specified and checked off.

"Grogram again," Guy would say, with a whimsical smile. "What, is it necessary to be married in all these dresses, Honor?"

But Dym, who knew his ways, saw he was not ill pleased.

The girl had her secret grumble out one day, when Honor and she were alone, which was seldom enough. Mrs. Chichester was always at the Cottage, and Guy came morning, noon, and night, and woe betide them all if Honor were absent or busy; his self-sacrifice would not brook her for more than a few hours out of his sight. Dym used to pity Honor for having so exacting a lover, but in her heart she thought it delightful: could any one be more handsome or chivalrous? she thought.

Humphrey used to quiz them sometimes in his slow way; he called them silent and unsociable, and in truth they were very quiet lovers. Dym's shrewd girlish eyes read differently. She saw that Honor was always grave and preoccupied when Guy was not with her; and there was a look in Guy's face, as he followed her slow graceful movement about the room, that told

Dym she was the light of his eyes, and the very joy of his heart.

Dym had her own code of ideas on the subject of lovers, and she chose to consider herself a little aggrieved at the fuss and ceremony Honor seemed to consider necessary; not that it was her business, she told herself. It must be confessed that Dym was strangely irritable just now.

"I never can understand the fuss people make over weddings and funerals," she said, in her quick dogmatic way, when Honor had asked her opinion on some trifle or other. "I suppose I like feathers and finery as much as women generally do, but somehow it seems to take off the sacredness of it so."

"I will decide on having a silver-grey silk; Guy likes it. Yes, I know what you mean," looking up. "These things seem incongruous when you are not inclined for them; but one cannot go against custom."

"I never expected to hear that from you, Honor; you are the most unconventional woman I know. I should not have thought," hesitating a little, as though her words might be considered ungracious, "that you would care so much for these things, especially now."

"Why, it is only now that I have begun to care for them. My dear Dym," smiling now as she caught sight of Dym's serious face, "it is very certain that you have never been in love."

"How can you tell that?" returned Dym obstinately. She flushed up as though Honor's

words annoyed her. She was subject to all sorts of cold and hot fits just now.

Mr. Chichester made up his mind his little friend was capricious, but Will grew more gentle with her every day.

"If you had been in love you would understand why I do care so much. You cannot think the pleasure that all this gives me," she went on softly. "Don't you know Guy will see me in all these dresses? Have you not found out what a critic he is in such a matter?"

"He said once he liked white," observed Dym, half to herself.

"I shall have some white dresses certainly, evening as well as morning," returned Honor, accepting the suggestion with all gravity. "I have known Guy so long, that I have discovered all his favourite shades. Some colours quite hurt his eyes. It costs me a little trouble, but I know it will gratify him."

She finished with so sweet a smile that Dym felt rebuked for her censoriousness. But not even Dym, affectionate and honest-hearted as she was, could guess the breadth and depth of a love like Honor's.

It was just at this juncture that Will entered.

"I did not expect to find you here, Miss Nethecote," he said, with a little surprise, as he quietly greeted them both.

"Mr. Chichester has gone to York," returned Honor, with the frank blush with which she always spoke of him, "and it is so bitterly cold that I have not ventured to go up to Ingle-

side. Mrs. Chichester is coming presently, I believe."

"Yes; she had sent her love, and she will be with you in an hour or two."

"You are tired," observed Honor, with one of her quiet glances, as he drew an easy chair to the fire and spread his thin hands over the blaze.

The corners of Will's mouth showed the fragment of a smile.

"Your supposition is correct, Miss Nethecote, I am afraid. Your happy valley is not to compare with Rasselas'. I think even *ennui* is preferable to east wind."

"Ah, it has made your rheumatism worse."

"Nothing of which to speak," was the somewhat comical answer. "I have only been flagellated by a scourge at every street corner. I think those Greek pagans were to be forgiven for their superstition, when they thought a noisy divinity was bawling in their ears in an unknown language. I wonder if their bones ever ached when they worshipped him."

Honor's only answer was to pile one fragrant pine-knot on another. Will watched the strong white hands as they handled the smooth logs so deftly. When she had done she still kept the place on the rug, looking down on him.

Most women look better in a sitting than a standing attitude; they can walk, but few have the art of posing themselves gracefully. Honor Nethecote never looked better than she did now; her grand figure, drawn to its full height; her hands folded before her; the set of her head

perfect; but her eyes, how kindly they looked at Will!

"Miss Nethecote, why will you make me feel so uncomfortable?" Will would have elucidated his own words by rising and offering his chair, but she stopped him.

"Please do not disturb yourself, I like standing."

"Well, you have the advantage of me every way," returned Will resignedly, but with a touch of gentle sarcasm. "It appears I am to look up to you in spite of my efforts to hold my own."

"For shame, Mr. Elliott! Dym, why do you let your brother talk so?" And there was a generous flash in Honor's eyes. "After that I must take the lowest seat I can find, to be sure that I have brought myself to my proper level."

"Can we always find our level?" returned Will softly. "The ground would have to open, and let a few of us sink through it, in that case. Perhaps, as I am here to ask your assistance, you had better resume your former commanding position, Miss Nethecote."

"My assistance!" with some surprise; but the gentleness of her look added, "How can you find it in your heart to be so satirical to me?"

"Yes, if you will be so good as to give it," was the courteous answer. Will was properly grave now.

Honor had beckoned Dym to the cosy-looking chair beside her, and Will, shading his eyes from the sudden blaze, could see the two upturned faces directed towards him with some

little anxiety; at least, Honor's looked anxious. Dym hardly knew if Will were jesting or in earnest. Evidently Will was in no hurry to explain himself; he leant back in his chair, and his left hand toyed with the little gold cross—a gift from Dym—that hung suspended to his watch-chain, as he noted the pleasantness of the fire-side picture; Dym's shadowy little face—no longer bright and sparkling—and Honor's fair profile and coronet of ruddy brown hair.

"What is it, Will?" asked Dym at last, somewhat wearily.

She stirred a little as Will began his subject; Honor listened with grave intentness; she was evidently prepared for what he had to say. When he had finished, Dym caught her breath, and then sat up and looked at him with a moved face between laughing and crying.

"Well, Dym."

"Oh Will, is it really true? How kind, how generous, of Mr. Chichester! Oh, I am so glad!" and the little creature—for she was a little creature beside Honor—sprung up from her seat and threw her arms round his neck.

"Softly, my dear child. Why, what an excited Dym it is! We have not talked about it yet;" and as Will gently freed himself from her embrace a cloud came over his face that was not lost on Honor.

"Dym dear, I do not think your brother has finished all he has to say."

"Of course not. We shall not have finished all night long," exclaimed Dym in the same

hysterical voice. "Oh Will, to think you will not be worked to death any more at that dreadful old St. Luke's!"

Will did not answer for a moment; it was one of his wise ways not to speak quickly when he was annoyed, and Dym's speech had jarred terribly on him. The time had been when he could have found it in his heart to echo Dym's vehement assertion; when he too had revolted against the poverty and squalor of his surroundings; when he had thought the hand-to-hand fight against brutal ignorance and unreasoning sin a very pitiful contest indeed. And now it had come to this, that he could not bear a word against St. Luke's; that he had been called upon to declare that this work was the breath of life to him. How had it come to pass that he had so cast in his lot among his people that the thought of separation was still further embittering his toil-worn life? Is not rest sweet, even to the faithful labourers? Do not their eyes grow weary at times in looking at the harvests they have reaped?

In William Elliott's mind there was strange conflict, but there was peace; a laborious sadness, the result of physical exhaustion, was continually weighing down the brave spirit. "None more willing," he had said to Guy Chichester; "none weaker," he might have added.

Struggles of this sort are most painful to witness; flesh and blood revolts against the unnatural combat. One sees at the beginning the poor body will have the worst of it. The

lamps burn brighter; the spirit looks forth from the eyes — merciless, undaunted: the fierce wrestling goes on; the dust is stained with blood and sweat. "These men have borne the burden and heat of the day," but not for that will they rest.

When the battle is nearly at an end, there is a quick rally; the troops are put in order for a last charge; in the arena the race runs hottest at its close; the winning-post is near, the fainting victor already sees the crowns and chaplets of triumph; when the day deepens into evening, the faithful servant girds up his loins and watches for his master's coming. Shall the race wait? Shall the battle be half fought? Shall the talent be laid by in a napkin? "Not so," said William Elliott, for here lay the clue to an apparent inconsistency; "the night cometh when no man can work."

Did Dym guess she had hurt him, that she laid her cheek so fondly against his?

"I could not help it, Will; it is such a great, ugly, dingy place, and you never get a moment's rest when you are there."

Will listens with a curious smile.

"Is it dingy?" he wonders. There are wide street-corners, where the sweet air blows straight from Hampstead and Highgate; there are patches of green to be seen between the houses; when he walks up the street, the children look at the bowed figure and the bright kindly eyes, and smile and curtsey; the women come to the door with rough neighbourly greeting; and

even the sweep in Paradise Row pulls a grimy forelock as he passes. He has friends among them—many and many a one. It is not all rags and filth and wretchedness. How many life-histories he has conned among them—noble ones some of them—that would put to shame the most exciting fiction ever written! Humble heroes and heroines in real life, with unwashed faces perhaps, with rough knobby hands, with threadbare coats and patched gowns. Will knows them all; he has sat among them and given them the right hand of fellowship often and often.

Will likes to see the children he has baptized growing up about him; he gathers the bigger ones around him on Sunday afternoons, and tells them Bible stories—childish histories of Joseph and Samuel and Timothy. Little Dick Maynard thinks he would like to be Samuel best—Samuel's little coat, the altar lights, the swaying censers, Eli's hoary head, the hush, the mystery, the soft colouring, have wrought a vast impression on the crippled boy. Dick rehearses it all in the little garret when he and his family of linnets are alone. "When I grow up I mean to be a prophet," says Dick, with a flicker of his sandy eyebrows.

Poor little childish dreamer! The linnets sing on in their cage; the crutches are propped against the wall; the dust gathers on the accordion; Dick's little worn cap hangs against the door. Where is Dick himself? Ask the childless parents as they gather round their empty

hearth; ask stalwart Richard Maynard, who took the loss of his crippled boy so ill that his honest heart nearly broke under it; ask Susan, wiping the tears with her apron from her comely face, as Guy Chichester puts the same question.

"Dead and gone, sir. After what happened he just fretted his dear self away; took on and pined like double his years. Those are his birds, sir. Richard will not let any one clean them but himself. And there are his school-books, written so prettily; he was a rare scholar when Mr. Elliott learnt him. Going, sir? Ah, well, there isn't much to detain you here now!" and Susan wipes some more tears away as Guy Chichester goes out of the door.

All sorts of thoughts come into Will's mind as Dym nestles at his side, and Honor sits thoughtfully gazing into the fire; and he rouses himself with difficulty and looks at his sister.

"I was afraid you would take it in this way, Dym."

"Afraid! why, dear?"

"I might have known you would be glad for me to leave St. Luke's. Perhaps I ought not to have told you, but I want you to advise me; you—and you too," looking at Honor.

Miss Nethecote seemed a little disturbed.

"Surely you cannot doubt what our advice will be! But, then," breaking into a little smile, "we are not disinterested."

"You would have me accept the Squire's offer?"

"Have you any objection, Mr. Elliott?"

"Pardon me, that is begging the argument. I mean, do I dare to hope that I should be welcome among you, in spite of my infirmities?"

Miss Nethecote leant towards him and stretched out her hand.

"More welcome than I dare to tell you. Come, and we will prove it, Mr. Elliott."

"Thanks," replied Will hastily, as he returned the cordial pressure; "I may hope, then, that you will be my friend in this matter, Miss Nethecote?"

"Most surely," the touched gravity of her face bearing witness to her words.

"Then may I ask you not to add one iota of your persuasion to this, but to help this poor child to see it in another light, and to soften the Squire's disappointment if I feel bound to refuse his goodness?"

"Will, you are not serious!" exclaimed Dym, starting from her kneeling posture.

"Sit down again, Dym, and answer me a question. Do you wish this for your sake, or mine?"

"For both our sakes. Oh, Will, how can you think I could be so selfish as only to think of myself! Of course it would be delightful to live with you, and do everything for you." She went on rather less soberly. "We could have the very cottage that we planned to live in; there is one to let in the village; such a tiny place! with a honeysuckle over the porch, and a strip of garden in front; there is a little room looking on to the weir, where you could write

your sermon; and such a beautiful rowan-tree over the gate!"

Will shivered; rowan and rowan-berries always reminded him of his dream. "It is all very pretty, Dym, and very inviting, but your cottage wants something else."

"What is that?"

"A quiet conscience."

"Nonsense, Will."

"Ah, but it does. The little room looking over the weir may be well enough, but how am I to get my sermons written, if I am not to practise what I preach?"

"Dym does not understand you," observed Honor. She had not once taken her eyes off the brother and sister; she began to apprehend Will's meaning—he was nerving himself for a refusal.

"But she will try to understand me, will she not?" was the gentle answer. "I know how you would like that cottage, Dym; and it is just that that makes it so hard to decide. I know, too, that for some things it would be better for you to come to me when you leave Ingleside."

"You think, then, she must leave it," interrupted Miss Nethecote, but her colour rose with the question.

"Yes," returned Will, looking at her. "I know what your generous purpose is, Miss Nethecote, but it will not answer. Dym feels it too; she has told me that when you come as mistress to Ingleside, her work there will be over."

"I thought, perhaps—" but there Honor hesitated, and again Will gave her one of his mild glances.

"I can interpret your thoughts better than you can," he said, cheerfully. "I know you too well to fear you will do the injustice to either her or yourself to allow her to take a daughter's place at Ingleside; your very love to your future husband insures your devotion to his mother."

"How well you read me!" returned Honor—and this time the frank eyes were swimming in tears; "this is what I wish—what I have desired with all my heart to do, only I cannot bear that Dym should be banished."

"She will not be banished from your love, Miss Nethecote. I know Dym well enough to be sure she would not willingly usurp your place; and knowing this, it does seem hard to send her out into the world again."

"I am older and wiser now. I can work," interrupted Dym proudly. Will passed his hand over the soft hair with a caressing gesture.

"You will work, and bravely too, dear. I have never doubted your courage, Dym; but you will think me hard for all that."

"I do not understand you, certainly," was the uncompromising answer—Dym's heart was growing a little sore and angry over Will's strange hesitation—"when we have always wished to live together, when you have so often been lonely and wanted me."

"I shall always want you, Dym darling. I

wish I could take you back to St. Luke's with me now"—but a strange earnestness coming into his voice—"my heart fails me when I think of leaving my work."

Dym did not answer; and he went on: "I am not fit for new places. I am a poor creature, Dym, and the old grooves fit me best; the time has gone by," he went on more hurriedly, "when I should have been happy in this dream-cottage of ours. I should like to have you near me, but I should be restless without my work. Granted that the strain is great, that I have too much to do at St. Luke's, it is better to wear out than rust out—as I should do here."

"For shame, Will; rust out among your friends, and in this lovely place!"

Will shook his head sadly.

"Even here; the worn-out hack runs best in its old traces. You want to turn me out to grass, Dym, and I have no appetite for it; even the weir and the honeysuckle will be less sweet to me than the children's faces in the dingy streets you hate."

"Will, is this your only reason?"

Perhaps Dym's question was abrupt, for Will's pale face grew a little paler over it.

"If I have other reasons—good only to myself—my child must trust me with them," he returned quietly. "They lie between me and my conscience. Will you try not to think me too hard, Dym, because I have refused to share with you the only little gleam of sunshine that

has fallen across our path? Will you forgive and trust me still that I am doing the right thing, though you do not know all my reasons?"

It must have been a sullen nature that could have resisted that pleading voice. Dym could not. "I have nothing to forgive; you are always right, Will," faltered the little sister; but evidently the struggle was a hard one, for as he stooped down and kissed her she suddenly caught her hands from his and sprang away; and Honor could hear a low sob as the door closed behind her.

Will rose as though to follow her, and then he sat down again:

"She is a dear good child," he murmured, and his tone was full of pain. "Miss Nethecote, you will keep your promise, you will try to comfort her for her disappointment, and help Mr. Chichester to see this in its true light?"

"I will try, but I am rather doubtful of my success. If you knew how he has set his heart on this—he and all of us!"

"It does me good to hear it. When I go back to St. Luke's it will be sweet to remember that you all wished me to come among you. Believe me, I am not ungrateful—you do not think me so?" hesitating as though for her to speak.

"No, not ungrateful; no one who knows you could entertain such a thought for a moment; but I think you are wrong."

"In what?" returned Will, with a sudden flush.

"Do you need to ask the question?" she replied, looking at him with eyes full of kindness. "We are your friends, and yet you deny us your confidence. You are in trouble; you have some secret fear or anxiety upon you; rather than tell us, you will go back to St. Luke's and bear it alone. Is this fair, is this kind, Mr. Elliott?"

For one moment the thought crossed Will's mind that he would partially unburden himself to this large-hearted woman, who looked at him with such honest eyes, whose voice was so full of sympathy; but the next minute he rejected it with scorn: it was weak, cowardly; he knew enough of Miss Nethecote's benevolent nature to be sure it would cast a shadow over her brightness, she was so pitiful over any sort of suffering.

"Some walk in sunshine, and some in shadow, each in his own path; it will not lighten the burden because I shift it off on other shoulders," thought Will.

"Will you trust me?" she repeated, coming a little closer to him.

"I cannot," replied poor Will; his head drooped on his breast, a sudden pain tortured the poor heart. Was this the end of it all—had he been wrong—was it all a mistake? Who knows?

"At least you will let us do all we can for you?" pleaded Honor. "When I was sick, you visited me; when I was unhappy you consoled me; it is you to whom we owe our happiness. Guy and I will never forget that."

"I only did my duty," responded Will sadly; "it was one more to whom to minister. You have your life before you, Miss Nethecote—I told you so then." He paused—some change came over his face, some strange energy into his voice—and as she was about to speak, with some sudden impulse he turned and blessed her as she stood.

The rooms at Nidderdale Cottage were empty when Humphrey came back to them the next evening. Will had taken his sister up to Ingleside, and he and Dym were having a quiet time together.

Dym secretly reproached herself for not enjoying it more; in spite of her efforts the week wore slowly away. Will was all that she could wish; he drove out with her, walked with her up and down the sunny terraces, read and talked to her, but still there was something wanting. Reading and conversation had lost their flavour; strange silences fell between this brother and sister, who had hitherto been all in all to each other. In Dym's manner there was a little reserve, a slight infusion of gravity. Will's gentleness could not lay the uneasy spirit. Will, as he looked at her, sometimes feared that something had quelled the sweet buoyancy of her spirits for ever.

What was it? I wonder if Dym could have answered? A secret dissatisfaction troubled her serenity. Was she sick or unhappy, that this sudden loathing had come upon her? You may

be sure Will dealt tenderly with the girl's soreness and irritability. Had her faith in him received a shock? Did she distrust the kindness that had refused to make a home for her?

Will could not tell; they had never referred to the conversation they had had at the Cottage. Dym talked little about St. Luke's; she listened patiently, but without interest, when Will told her about the new schools that Mr. Chichester had promised to build, and how, when the Vicarage was finished, he was to have rooms in it, and live with Mr. Benedict, who was a childless widower.

"I shall be quite rich then," observed Will cheerfully. "Fifty pounds a year more, and no rent to pay. You will come and stay with me then, Dym, weeks and weeks at a time. You know Mr. Benedict will be glad to have you for your own sake as well as mine. His sister, Mrs. Musgrave, comes to him for months together."

"Yes, Will," returned Dym languidly; come to him—of course she would come to him. She looked at Will with puzzled eyes when he asked how soon she would have to leave Ingleside. How could she know? There were all sorts of plans revolving in Mr. Chichester's mind, Dym believed; something was said of his taking Honor away for a long time. Honor wanted to see Rome and Switzerland; and then Dr. Grey had spoken of a winter at Mentone; it might be that she would be still at Ingleside for months.

"I am glad to hear it," was Will's reply. But there was the same dull puzzled look in Dym's dark eyes; was she glad too? perhaps so. It had come to this, that the very stones of Ingleside were dear to her; that she would rather stay there in the empty solitary rooms than leave it for another place.

Dym had her visitings of compunction after Will had left her: after all, had she treated him kindly?

She came out and fingered his wraps with little cold hands when the carriage drove round to take him to the station, and then busied herself with the parcels of sandwiches the housekeeper had thoughtfully sent up as provision for the journey.

"I suppose you send your love to Dick?" inquired Will, as he invested himself with some difficulty into his greatcoat.

"Yes, yes," she returned, bursting into tears. Oh, why had she been so hard and disagreeable to him? He was everything to her—father and mother and sister and brother in one; he had never thwarted her, never spoken unkindly to her all her life long, and yet how often she had been cross with him!

"Take care of yourself. I cannot bear you to go. Promise me you will come and see me again," she sobbed, clinging to him.

Will looked at her in a little surprise, but he was kinder than ever, Dym thought in her penitence. She stood at the door waving her hand and trying to smile as the carriage rolled down

the sweep; he could see the flutter of her grey dress on the terrace long after he was down the hill; the sun was shining on the Vicarage walls as he passed, on the gay beds of crocuses, on the green meadows with their clumps of alders and small black cattle; the mill-wheel was whirring as he passed, and two of the miller's rosy-faced daughters were gathering up the piles of sweet sun-dried linen; down by the river there was shadow and coolness; the water came frothing over the great stones; above was a grey sweep with a dull brightness on it; there was the cottage with the porch and the rowan-tree; and then Will folded his arms and looked no more.

Dym had a long cheerful letter before many days were over. Will spoke as though he were glad to be back at his work again; he was better and stronger; his long rest had refreshed him; he was ready to throw himself heart and soul into his labours. Every one had welcomed him, from Dick, who had composed a new tune on the occasion, to old cross-grained Widow Bates, who had actually scolded him in one breath for gadding about, and then told him that he was a "sight good for sore eyes." Will had seen his Birstwith friends twice; Mr. Chichester had made one of his headlong descents on St. Luke's, and had carried him off, in spite of his entreaties to the contrary, to the pleasant Kensington house where they had established themselves.

It was an artist's house, Will told her; a sunshiny old place with a long narrow lawn and a

cedar-tree, with curious landing-places, and odd-shaped rooms full of heavy carved furniture; the studio opened out of the drawing-room, where they took their coffee. Will from his seat had a strange vista before him: suits of armour, velvet doublets, tall goblets of red Venetian glass, sunshine, fencing foils, a statue or two, yards and yards of finished and unfinished paintings.

Will put in a little bit of painting himself very prettily; he made Dym see it all. Honor in her white dress standing against the crimson drapery; Guy leaning negligently against a bust of Pallas Athène; Mrs. Chichester in her brocade and ruffles, sitting so erect in her high-backed chair. "Miss Nethecote sang to us; she has a beautiful voice, mellow and rich. I liked to hear Chichester's grand bass chiming in now and then," wrote Will. Dym put down the letter with a little sigh. How plainly she could see it all! There was a pleasant perfumy sweetness about the picture; there must have been tulips in the tall Venetian glasses; little spots of violet fragrance, dotted here and there about the room; the window would be open, and reflect the shadow of the cedar. Dym could almost hear the short racy sentences scattered broadcast from behind the bust of Pallas Athène, and Honor's voice chiming like silver bells.

One day they had all come down to St. Luke's, almost taking Will's breath away. Paradise Row had never known such an excitement as when Mrs. Tressilian's fine carriage had put them down and rolled away. One little urchin had

cried "Hurrah!" when Jeames, in his plush and powder, had clambered up beside his friend the coachman. Poor little man! even the smart hammercloth was a mystery and astonishment. The horses curveted as grandly as the pony in the circus, Dick confided to his mother afterwards. One may imagine with what feelings Dick clutched his crutches and shuffled away as the tall lady with the kind eyes came up the steps; even Mrs. Chichester's white curls were alarming. Dick's accordion sounded a few terrified notes as it rolled down into the area.

"Is Mr. Elliott at home, my little man? There's a bright sixpence for you. Surely you have not forgotten your old friend?"

Dick's bright eyes dance delightedly as they go into the narrow passage. "Was it for this he refused to come to us?" thinks Honor.

There is the open door, the bending figure over his books; a little fiendish-looking, dusty kitten squatting at his elbow. How small and dingy it is! Flower-pots and books, shouting children, and dulness. Will pushes back his hair with a little bewilderment, as Mrs. Chichester's white curls and Honor's beautiful face come within the radius of his vision.

"Ah, ha! we have caught you," cries Guy, taking him by the shoulders. "The spider in his den—the student at his books. Do the inhabitants of Kentish Town understand the mystery of five o'clock tea, I wonder? We have come to tea—my mother and Honor and I—and we want you to show us St. Luke's, and the new Vicarage,

and the site for the schools—to do the honours of Kentish Town, in fact."

Will tries hard to wake out of his bewilderment, as he shuts up Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*. Will Mrs. Maynard's kettle be boiling? Has she teacups and saucers enough? He remembers guiltily that, in a moment of weakness, he had given his afternoon portion of milk to the thirsty kitten.

But Mrs. Maynard had two capital ingredients in her character—resources and ideas. Will wonders mildly as all manner of good things group themselves on the tables: milk—no, it is actually cream, cool Devonshire butter—a crusty loaf, a very *chef-d'œuvre* of bakery, teacakes and marmalade, even a few pink prawns reposing on green leaves. Worthy Mrs. Maynard gives a little nod of triumph as she leaves the room; and Will blesses her in his heart. Honor takes her place, and makes tea with her usual quiet grace; the rest gather round the table; the kitten finds its way to Guy's knee, and is petted and christened "Demon" on the spot. This is better than the studio at Kensington, Will thinks; his worn face—and Honor thinks it is paler and more worn since she saw it last—lights up at the sight of these dear people gathered round his little table. How happy they all are! what a running fire of wit and raillery from Guy! He is full of mischief to-night; he rails a little on the subject of Honor's finery; he declares that half the shopwomen in London are engaged on that fabulous trousseau. Honor bears it well;

the bright smiling eyes enjoy the fun, but in Will's opinion she looks just a trifle jaded.

"We shall all be glad when we get back," she says when Will hints at this; "shopping and sight-seeing are very tiring things. Mrs. Tressilian has taken us to the theatre twice; Mrs. Chichester likes it, and so Guy thinks we ought to go."

Mr. Chichester took Will aside before their visit was over. "We have been to the oculist," he says. "After all, it is a simple cataract; the pain was merely a little local inflammation; she has caught cold, he says. But there is no doubt that it has made great progress; she can scarcely see at all—less than we thought. Mr. Paget thinks that in a few months both eyes will be ready for couching."

If Mrs. Chichester be more blind, Will thinks, she has never looked more cheerful. The most perfect understanding seemed to prevail between the three. Guy's manners were denuded of their little roughnesses; Mrs. Chichester turned her face oftenest to her son; but she seemed to depend most on Honor. It was Honor who laid aside her wraps, smoothed out the soft curls, and hovered round her with a thousand nameless attentions; Honor who sat beside her, and talked to her while the others discussed some parish news; Honor who seemed to anticipate every want before it could be named.

Did Guy notice this devotion? Will saw him watching them once, while he was detailing a new scheme of the Vicar's; something soft and

luminous came into Guy's eyes, and then the two men looked at each other.

They had no need to speak. "Can any one be like her? Am I not blessed beyond my deserts?" Guy's eyes seemed to say, and Will smiled an assent.

CHAPTER XI.

AMONGST THE FIR-TREES.

THE spring sunshine was flooding the low meadows beside the Nidd when Guy Chichester brought his mother back to Ingleside, and Honor went home to the Cottage to gladden her brother's heart for a few days before her bright smile and kindly presence vanished from his hearth for ever.

Who can imagine the joy with which honest Humphrey welcomed back his Duchess? His pleasure was outspoken, very different from the shy greeting Dym bestowed on her friends.

"I have enjoyed my visit, but it is pleasant to be home again," observed Mrs. Chichester, in the cosy confidential half-hour before dinner, when she and Dym were alone together. The little dainty tea equipage was beside them; Dym sat on a low chair, leaning forward till her face almost touched Mrs. Chichester's lap; she wore her white dress, with a little breastknot of violets and ferns; the porch window stood open, and the lowing of cattle came over the dewy meadows. Nature was undergoing its annual revival: trees were bursting into new life, tender

green shoots were unfolding, little wayside flowers struggled into existence; everywhere there were buds, brightness, a sense of growing vigour and strength; white lambs, uncouth calves, yellow ducklings; the earth was full of young things; every nest was crowded with bright-eyed clamorous creatures, with open beaks and downy breasts, and unfledged fluttering wings.

With spring comes restlessness. Why is it, I wonder? The blood courses more quickly through the veins as the new sap stirs under the woody heart of elms and beeches. Do we throw out new shoots, too? Do we unfold fresh leaves, and quiver into new life? Whence proceed those strange stirrings, those vague yearnings, those odd pulsations, and moods of feeling? Is Nature reproaching us for our sluggishness? Is it for this reason that she is preaching her sweet revivals in a thousand different utterances—in blades of grass, in bird songs, in green hedge-rows? Under her influence plodding natures wake into sudden ambitions; prosaic natures break into spasms and snatches of poetry; contented home-staying natures rouse restless and suddenly tire of their narrow confines. "Over the hills and far away," what is the great unknown world doing? There is the scent of far-off spices in the air; the sun rises and sets on fair tracts of country, on lakes and rivers, and mountains, on rolling prairies and vast cities. How many of us would go forth, I wonder, as the prince in the fairy tale, led by this same restless spirit? What is the good of delving and

toiling and spinning? Where are the enchanted shoes? Bring forth the cap of darkness!

The village is asleep; the martins are twitting and fluttering in the eaves; the pigeons are tumbling and cooing in the red sunshine; a meek-faced sheep, feeding on the short sweet herbage, starts aside in a fright as we pass. Are we really sober middle-aged men and women? Are there aches, pains, rags, and broken hearts? Let us come out of the sunshine, and bring our dreams with us—our work will be all the sweeter for them. Through all the thousand years that the old earth has lasted, men have stretched out their hands and rejoiced in the spring. "For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear in the land, and the time of the singing of birds is come." How fair must have been those spring days in the Holy Land!

This restlessness had come to Dym—a great quaver of discontent and longing. The beautiful ideal life, where was it? Beyond those golden-edged clouds perhaps, folded away somewhere in those dim blue skies. She listens with an odd pathos of silence as Mrs. Chichester weaves a gay little web of talk. How bright, how incongruous it sounds to Dym! Picture galleries, theatres, and bales of velvet and silks. "It was the prettiest shopping in the world; and then Guy used to take us to the Parks—people turned round to look at him and Honor as they walked; but I don't think Honor noticed it," prattled on Mrs. Chichester innocently. Then and afterwards she was never weary of descanting on

Honor's rare beauty, her merits and loveableness. Did Dym secretly take herself to task for that secret sting of pain with which she listened to these descriptions? She brooded over them sadly, and with a little envy, afterwards. How she had hated those green parks, when she had walked in them with only Edith as her companion! The glittering Serpentine, the long Row, the dazzling line of carriages and equestrians. What a shifting phantasmagoria it had seemed, of faces and sunshine, and horses and dusty chariots! How different it must have looked to those two! Honor's serene eyes would have a pleasant puzzled expression in them; now and then she would send out curious flashes of inquiry and amusement into the unknown world before her, all the while she moved so stately and erect beside her lover. Dym could fancy the sarcasm with which Guy would hail some odd study of character, as he lounged indolently under the green trees; his quibs and jests, his half-serious raillery against Vanity Fair, its foibles and weaknesses, and his secret pride as men looked at the beautiful woman beside him.

With all his sarcastic speeches, Honor wearied of it sooner than he did. She used to be glad when, in the cool of the evening, they drove back to the old Kensington house. The half studio, half drawing-room would be very restful after the day's bustle and sunshine. Dym could imagine her coming down in her white gown, with calm, satisfied eyes, to talk and sing to them. I sup-

pose the lovers had most of it to themselves after all. Mrs. Chichester dozed a great deal. Honor would go out and walk with Guy on the lawn under the cedar-tree; the bell from some neighbouring church would ring out for evening service; on the other side of the ivied walls another pair of lovers would be whispering; a tall poplar waved; now and then a few sleepy bird notes came from under the red eaves; a few stars peeped out. What wonderful low-toned talks they had in that old garden! talks whose sweetness healed the pain of years, and lit the future with radiance.

Dym's face still wore its odd wistful expression, when Guy came and laughingly scolded them for unsociability. As he took his mother down the low broad stairs, he gave his other hand to Dym. Happiness was making him more than usually beneficent; the keen eyes looked at her with grave kindness as they took their places at the table.

"When do you mean to be your old self again, Miss Elliott?" he asked; but there was something reproachful in his tone.

Dym flushed up a little—perhaps she wondered what he meant. She was well enough, and strong—quite strong, she assured him. But Guy thought the unsmiling dark eyes had a strange heaviness in them.

"Illuminations are always prepared for illustrious visitors; you have not lit up yours, Miss Elliott; you are too much like your name." It was the old kind quizzing, but Dym winced under

it. By-and-bye his tone changed, as he bade her fetch some parcel from the library. "You must send her out more, mother; she is getting too grave and quiet. This illness has quite altered her," he said, when Dym had disappeared on her errand.

Dym was not a bit grave when she came back; she was in a rosy flush to her fingers' ends. They had not forgotten her, then, these kind friends; from their own overflowing feast of happiness they had spared a few crumbs to the young dependent. Dym's eyes could sparkle now. Something very nearly approaching to tears shone in them as the knots gave way and revealed the soft folds of silk, with a little satin-lined morocco box reposing on it.

Dym had hardly patience to look at the beautiful violet dress Mrs. Chichester had so thoughtfully provided for her, with the fine embroidered handkerchief and dainty lace ruffles, so great was her eagerness to explore the contents of the tiny box. She knew almost before she opened it who was the unknown giver. If Guy had wished to give pleasure, he had fully succeeded. Dym gave a little gasp of surprise and admiration as the dead-gold locket, with its delicate filigree chain, came to view. "From her friends, Honor Nethecote and Guy Chichester," was the pencilled inscription. There were Honor's eyes smiling at her inside, and a plait of the ruddy brown hair.

"Honor thought you would like it best. Is it your taste? is it pretty enough, eh?" Dym

gave him her hand, almost too overwhelmed to speak; but her eyes must have thanked him. "We shall have the illumination after all; you have mounted two red flags already," said Guy comically, as he smiled at her.

What a little it had cost him! Honor and he had selected it from a host of shining toys at the end of a day's shopping. "Better take the one with the diamond star, sir," the civil shopman had said to him; "it is dearer, but it is more worth the money, and the lady will like it better." "My good fellow," responded Guy drolly, "there are ladies and ladies. Some have to do without diamond stars, and be content with plain chasing; we will take the larger one of dead gold, please."

"I suppose you will want to thank Honor for this. Get your hat and something warm, and I will take you over to the Cottage."

Dym flew to get ready. How long was it since she had walked with him! She kissed the locket as she put it on. How it glittered and shone in the twilight! She ran down the terrace, led by the tiny red glow of a cigar in the distance. Kelpie bounded towards her, barking with delight.

"How cool these spring evenings are! Do you mind my cigar? How have you and old Humphrey been getting on, Miss Elliott?"

Dym did not want to talk about Humphrey Nethecote; she dismissed the subject with a hasty word. There was the moonlight streaming on the field-path, and the old trysting-stile. "So-ho, my little lady, Humphrey is not good enough for

you, eh?" thought Guy; and his keen eyes scrutinized the little figure at his side in the dainty white dress, with the scarlet hood drawn coquettishly over the bright hair.

Dym's face grew wistful again as they walked on silently. There was the stone fence where she had met with her accident. Was it years or months ago since she had lain there, with Cerberus browsing on the scanty herbage on the other side of the wall? Involuntarily she shivered, as though she felt the cold slush and snow again, the sweeping night winds, and the sickening crushing pain of her poor foot.

"Are you cold?—ah, now I remember. Don't you know, my child, we should never recal sad things? Give me your hand; here are the steps in the wall."

Did Guy's kind heart detect the trembling and coldness, that he kept it in his own for so long, and then placed it quietly within his arm as he talked to her cheerfully about the happy days he trusted would be in store for all of them?

"I shall leave my mother in your care. It is a sacred charge, Miss Elliott, and I know it will be faithfully fulfilled. When the autumn brings us back again I shall find you here?"

His tone was interrogative.

"Yes—that is if you and Miss Nethecote wish it, Mr. Chichester."

"Honor would wish to keep you altogether, but it appears your brother has settled it otherwise."

"Will thinks I ought to go."

"Will Clericus has a few stubborn notions of his own, on which I should like to set my heel. I am not quite sure his views are sound; he is too strongly impregnated with the doctrine of works. When people go in for being saints, I always mistrust them."

"Mr. Chichester," broke in the little sister indignantly.

"Don't disturb yourself; he has not taken to shaving his head or wearing sandals yet, only the air of St. Luke's is getting too rarefied for me. I breathe better in a more murky atmosphere."

But Dym would not see the joke.

"I wish there were more like him," she returned, rather soberly.

"Well, I believe you are right," was the candid answer. "But to return to our vexed question. I shall be heartily sorry if you have to leave us, Miss Elliott."

"Thank you. You do not know how much good it does me to hear you say so, Mr. Chichester," faltered poor Dym.

"Why, you knew that before, didn't you?" in a tone of surprise. "Well, I suppose it is only in human nature that I should feel grateful to Honor for wishing to take this work on herself. She knows what I think of it."

"She has wished it all along. I think she is right," said Dym honestly.

"It is like her goodness," his voice breaking a little with earnestness; "you and I know what that is, Miss Elliott. I am only afraid whether this attention to my mother will not tie her too

much;" and under his breath, "I shall want my wife to myself."

"I do not think she will feel it so," replied Dym eagerly. As usual, she had thrown herself heart and soul into her friends' interests. "We have talked it over. Honor is so fond of reading; she says it will be quite a delight for her to go through her favourite authors again."

"Jeremy Taylor, to wit. I fancy Honor is a little bitten with him too." Then, with a touch of his old drollery, "It is a bore when one's future wife has High-Church proclivities. Well, the Thousand and One tales are right enough; but how about the thousand and one letters?"

"We thought," returned Dym modestly—"that is, I thought and Honor approved—that Phyllis writes so well, has so pretty a handwriting, that I am sure she would satisfy Mrs. Chichester. Phyllis is so neat-handed, and has such pleasant ways with her," finished Dym, in the quiet old-fashioned manner that had grown on her lately; but there was a possible hint of heart-break in her voice all the same. It is hard for all of us to delegate a dearly-loved duty to another.

"Somebody else has pleasant ways with her," thought Guy. Did he understand the girl's grief and despair at the thought of leaving them? The little hand that lay like a feather's weight on his arm trembled still. Perhaps he longed to quiet it; perhaps, in the heaven of his own content, he desired to drop another crumb of comfort into the lap of the little creature whom Fate had brought into the storehouse of his bounty.

Anyhow, as he looked at her, there came into Guy Chichester's eyes—generally so keen and quizzical—a certain warm luminous light, a look that none but those whom he loved and trusted ever won from him.

"I must have a talk with Phyllis; she is a faithful satellite of your own, Miss Elliott. Well, it is a kind thought, and I thank you for it. One of these days I hope you will ask me to do something for you in return."

"I am too deeply grateful already. I would not make the burden heavier," stammered Dym.

"Pooh!—nonsense," he returned hastily; and then relapsing again into his kind tone, "remember, if you are in any trouble or any perplexity you have given me the right to help you."

"I—how do you mean, Mr. Chichester?"

"Are you not my good little friend? shall I not always hold you as such? and do not friends help each other? It is not my nature to be fickle, Miss Elliott; and I know wherever you are you will always be faithful to me and mine."

"Faithful to him and his;" in the years to come Dymphna Elliott nobly fulfilled those words; when Guy Chichester reaped a rich harvest of the few kindly words and deeds that the man in his generosity had scattered broadcast into the furrows of a simple girl's heart.

"Sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand." It costs nothing to speak a few kindly words, to drop a little speech of sympathy and encouragement here and there—words which the birds of the air may carry away, perhaps, but

will leave us none the poorer; deeds which will take root and spring forth into goodly fruit.

Why are our harvest fields, then, so bare, and the garners of our benevolence so empty? After all there is deep meaning in the fairy tale. Even now there are some lips which are for ever opening and dropping roses and pearls and diamonds. The princess may be poorly clad, she may have homely features, she may not have drawn a prize in this world's lottery; but if she have gentle tones for children, loving words of sympathy for the sick and aged, if her mouth open for kindly smiles, for tender speeches of consolation, she has the gift, though no aged fairy has given it to her; and her diamonds have the true lustre, though they may not shine in this world.

Guy dropped Dym's hand hastily from his arm as they came to the patch of moonlight road before the cottage. There was Honor waiting for him with her lace shawl drawn over her head, and Humphrey in his straw hat beside her.

There was a warm embrace between her and Dym, and a few whispered words of thanks and greetings, and then Guy eagerly claimed her.

How tranquil and still the little garden looked this evening!—a shimmer of pink and white apple-blossoms, of moonlight and white paths together; the orchard was a glittering bridal bouquet of blossom; the trickling of the little beck in the dell was plainly audible; there was a sweet scent of hawthorn and lilac in the air; now and then came a distant bleat from a stray sheep on the common.

"How peaceful it all is! there is quite a story-book feeling about it, isn't there?" says Humphrey with a grotesque glimmering after something undefinable and poetical: if he could have expressed it there would have been a whole idyl of tender sentiment in his heart to-night—to see Dym in her white dress walking down those shining paths beside him, to put back the low branches and overhanging hedgerows that not a fold of her dainty raiment may be disturbed, to blunder out his honest confidence about the loneliness of his home when his Duchess left it, and his unselfish delight in her happiness;—all this was bliss to Humphrey.

I wonder whether Dym heard it all, and with what sort of feverish impatience she listened now and then. She returned half-comprehending answers; she was a little *distraite* and absent. Before her there were two figures; their heads seemed touched with glory. Presently they crossed into a belt of shadow; Guy's face was in shade, but Honor's was still touched with light. By-and-bye there was a sudden turn in the path, and they passed out of her sight.

The afternoon after her return to Nidderdale Cottage Honor went over to Woodside. There only wanted three days to the wedding, and womanly hands and brains were full of a hundred arrangements. Dym was installed at the Cottage with orders to make herself useful in every possible way, so there she and Honor had been all the morning, sorting and labelling gifts for the school children. Honor was going down in state

to the school the next day to deliver them in person and take leave of her scholars: and afterwards there were her poor people to visit, and humble friends dwelling in outlying cottages on the edges of the moor; and this with Guy claiming every minute of her time, and proposing impossible rides and drives to all kinds of improbable places.

Dym could not help admiring the gentle tact with which she managed to evade his demands. "Give me these three days, dear Guy, I owe them to my friends; afterwards my time will belong to you," she said, with so charming a smile that Mr. Chichester forgot to grumble for full five minutes afterwards.

So Honor went down to Woodside, leaving Dym hard at work in the little room looking over the orchard and trout stream; and there Mr. Chichester spent a long afternoon, walking up and down under the sunny walls chewing the cud of discontent and anticipation together and occasionally stopping to address some railing observation on the contrary ways of women through the open window, for Dym's benefit.

At the garden-gate Honor came upon Dr. Grey himself.

"The very person I was wanting to see," he exclaimed as they shook hands. Dr. Grey was looking thin and careworn; there were fresh lines on the forehead that Dym had once pronounced noble-looking; the hair had worn off it still more; he was an anxious middle-aged man now.

Rupert came down the garden-path, shouting at the sight of his friend; his father, however, quietly told him to go back, and the little fellow slunk sorrowfully away; but Honor noticed the sad gentleness with which he spoke to his boy, so different from his old irritable manner.

"I sent Rupert in because I wanted to speak to you, Miss Nethecote; Esther is asleep. Shall we take a turn in the fir-wood?" and as Honor signified her assent, they climbed up the steep little lawn and went through the gate into the scented dusk that lay behind it.

How fragrant those pines were that afternoon! how crisply the dead bracken of last year, with its fresh young spikes shooting through, yielded to their footsteps! what a delicious green gloom pervaded the little wooded hill! Dr. Grey walked up the ascent with his hands behind him and his eyes fixed thoughtfully on the ground. He roused himself by-and-bye to make a few professional inquiries after Honor's health, and when these were satisfied, and a congratulatory word or two had been spoken, he came to the subject he had on his mind.

"Do you remember a few words you spoke to me last summer, Miss Nethecote, when you told me to find out what was the matter with Esther?"

"I am afraid I took a great liberty with you, Dr. Grey," she rejoined with her frank blush. "I am very out-spoken with my friends."

"I am glad you count us among them. My poor wife, as you know, is devoted to you. You have cured me of my scepticism on the subject

of women's friendship," he went on with a faint smile. "Do you remember our long arguments last summer?"

"We shall have a great many more, I hope," returned Honor heartily.

Dr. Grey shook his head. "I never look far into the future; that was the kindest word you ever spoke to me; it opened my eyes to the state Esther was in."

"Well!" interrupted Honor breathlessly.

"I had grown so used to her invalid ways, it was so sore a truth to me that Esther could never be the active woman that I longed to see her, that I believe I closed my eyes wilfully to the discomfort of her position."

"I am afraid you did," replied Honor very gravely.

"One grows callous and unfeeling sometimes. Doctors have a hard life of it; and it is sad work when there is always an invalid at their own hearth. There were times, I grant it, when I pitied myself more than her, when I believed her capable of greater effort, when I grew impatient at the weakness of her will."

"But you own now you were wrong, Dr. Grey."

"I own it with the deepest grief and remorse. You are Esther's friend; you judged her more generously. I see she has no longer the power to make these efforts."

"Not for the last few months; she has grown worse lately."

"True; your words opened my eyes to the extent of the mischief—I wish I could say it had

not then begun—a week or two earlier; but no, it would not have helped us."

"You frighten me, Dr. Grey. I hope there is nothing radically wrong with Esther."

"You must not blame me entirely if there is," he returned with a smile so sad that she could not but choose to forgive him. "Esther did not complain, and I was desperately hard worked just then. Typhoid fever had broken out in the cottages lower down, and for some nights I could scarcely snatch a minute's sleep; it was just then that you took alarm."

"I thought she looked very ill, and that there was something wrong; she always seemed to me the sort of woman who might go into a decline if she were not watched; is it that?" looking anxiously up into his sorrowful face.

"I wish it were; I wish my poor Esther could be saved in that way from even a portion of the suffering I fear for her:" he paused, as though from emotion, and then hurried on. "I was a little taken aback by what you said to me, and I resolved on watching her narrowly. Soon I had an uneasy conviction that things were even worse than I thought: in a few weeks these fears were verified."

Honor gave a low exclamation, but he went on without heeding her.

"I was desirous of having my treatment confirmed, and it was impossible to call in further advice without alarming Esther. She was very nervous about herself already. This difficulty was solved by an old friend, a London

physician, coming to see me on his way to Scotland."

"What a relief it must have been to you!"

"To have my treatment confirmed—you are right; there is not another man's opinion I could rely on more fully; it was Dr. Guthrie who ventured on breaking the truth to Esther. I had grown cowardly over it all, and was for deferring it;" and then in a few brief words he explained to Honor the exact nature of the cruel malady that had already fixed its fangs so deeply in the poor invalid.

William Elliott was not wrong when he read Honor's great pitying heart so truly. Honor covered up her face and wept the bitterest tears when she heard her friend's doom pronounced by her husband's lips; the sunshine seemed to have died out among the green gloom; the golden motes ceased to play between the mast-like stems of the firs. Good God, what a pitiful thing is this life after all! what strange inequalities of fate! what unanswered questions of lives! what meek martyrdoms! what cloudy skies for some! what great dazzling noon-tides for others!

Here was one woman looking half dazzled into a vista of happiness, watching the days go by with a certain sweet dizziness, knowing she will spend them beside the man she loves. Here is another, scarcely older than she, whose suns have already faded, whose life has been lived; who knows that slow decay, and secret anguish, and increasing torture await her; to whom death will come as a relief, the grave as her only rest.

Those tears fall refreshingly on the dry bitter pain that was in the man's heart. After all, has he been so much to blame? A little thoughtlessness, a little neglect, a secret mischief working without sign; suffering bravely borne without complaint; a woman's colour fading; a fragile body unconscious of its own decay.

"How did she bear it?" asked Honor, drying her eyes.

"Like an angel," answered the poor husband with a groan. "You will hardly believe how much she is changed, Miss Nethecote. No fretfulness, no worrying now; only anxiety for me and the children. She will be awake and expecting you now. I ought not to detain you any longer."

Honor gave him her hand without speaking. What was there to say? Our friends go down into the furnace, but the flames, scorching as they are, do not consume us as they did the Chaldean officers. The man had his bitter portion allotted to him, and he knew it. Long ago his wife had ceased to be to him the wife of which he had dreamed in his earlier years. She was beautiful and amiable, but she had wearied his soul with a daily weariness; she had dragged him down, till his vexation had well nigh destroyed the harmony of their lives. Why had he not borne more patiently with her? He loved her—he knew it now—in spite of all her faults; why had he not seen the burden of her work was too heavy for her? A hundred times lately he had recalled instances of her gentleness and wish

to please him. With all her fretfulness, had she ever spoken an angry word to him? Was she not the tenderest mother, the most loving in spite of her helplessness?

These were the questions Dr. Grey was ever asking himself as he went to and fro on his errands of healing. They kept him for a long time pacing the fir-woods after Honor had left him in search of her friend.

"Has Edward told you?" was Esther's first question as Honor entered the shady little parlour. The poor face was thinner and more faded since she had seen it last; the brown eyes had a dull, heavy look in them; there were silver threads running through the soft hair.

Honor's face must have answered her, for the poor thing shivered as she hid her face on Honor's arm. The baby lay asleep in its old-fashioned cradle, the other children were shouting and playing in the sunny front garden. Harry's solemn face and curls were seen through a vista of lilacs; there was the basket heaped up with little shirts and socks; the small table strewn with account-books and other articles of housewifery. These things had an unconscious pathos in them. The mother would not lay down her work till she was obliged. Do some women work on the rack, I wonder?

"Harry wants new socks," says Esther, pointing to them with tears in her eyes. Was there inconsistency in her speech—suffering and baby's socks—living wants blending with the shadow of approaching death? A mother working con-

tentedly in her pain, and listening to the children outside, and wondering how soon they would put on their little black frocks, and if Hannah would be kind to them, and what Edward would do without her.

Esther's patient eyes filled up with tears whenever she spoke of her husband and children. Little things had made her fretful, but in the hour of her trial there was no lack of fortitude. The poor weak creature had fallen back on her Christianity in her trouble, and found it all-powerful to help her. Her sadness was too deeply rooted for mere surface comfort. She was full of pity for her husband, but she put by all Honor's well-meant efforts of consolation.

"Of course it is very dreadful—the pain I mean—but I have to bear it; he is so good and kind, I try not to make it worse for him; it is so bad when it comes on in the night, and he can get no rest."

Honor ventured on a suggestion. Humphrey liked children; in a few days Nidderdale Cottage would be almost empty. Could not Rupert and Edgar, and perhaps Amy, go there for a little while? She was almost sorry she proposed it when she saw a cloud of sadness come over the poor mother's face.

"You are very kind, but I can hardly spare Amy, she is so useful, and is quite a little mother to the others; and Rupert—oh no," and here Esther's voice grew sharp with pain, "do not take away my children; they are so good, and I shall only have them for a little while longer."

"I only thought Hannah might be more at liberty to attend to you. Do not trouble yourself about it; we must think of some other way of helping you."

"Dear Honor, it is not necessary. I will not have you sadden your happiness with thoughts of me. Look here, what I have worked for the bride," and she drew from her pillow a little quilted satin glove-case. "It is a poor gift, dear, but I know you will value it for my sake." And then, as though the contrast between them saddened her, in spite of her efforts to smile, she burst into tears and threw her arms round Honor's neck, and whispered that her poor Esther would love her, and pray for her, and that she was not to fret when the news came, for if it were not for Edward she would be glad to go and have done with it all.

How sadly Honor walked back to the Cottage! Guy was sitting on a sunny bench on the edge of the common, and sprang up with a half jesting reproval on his lips as she came towards him. It died away as he caught sight of her tired face.

"My darling, what have you been doing with yourself?" he exclaimed, drawing her down beside him.

"O Guy, if I were ever to leave you as poor Esther is leaving her husband!" and Honor leant her face wearily against his shoulder as though her rest were there.

"Are things so bad at Woodside as all that?" he replied in a shocked voice. "Poor woman! I am sorry they have told you. Why, love, this

is a poor welcome!" as Honor, spent with excitement, shed a few more nervous tears. "You must not let even a passing sadness come between us now. I cannot bear to see your bright face dimmed for a moment."

"Talk to me, then, and help me to forget it," she replied with the saddest, sweetest smile. "Sometimes my happiness makes me afraid; it seems almost too perfect for earth."

"Do you know what that tells me?" he returned, with one of his brightest looks. A secret thrill crossed him as this proud, beautiful creature crept closer to him for protection from her own loving doubts.

The sunshine streamed down on the yellow gorse and broom, only the bracken at their feet lay in shadow; the birds were singing from a clump of firs lower down the road; the white geese came waddling over the common; up in the sky a lark was carolling; in the west a mass of white clouds, tinged with gold and crimson, struggled in the blue like a phantom ship on fire; near home the flecks of foam and whiteness resembled flocks of strange birds; the evening air was sweet with the breath of May. How could any sadness long resist such influences?

"Is the cloud gone?" he inquired presently. Need he have asked? was he not beside her? was not his voice in her ears?

"Now we will go home," she said, reaching out her hand. No wonder, as she smiled at him, that Guy was dazzled at the brightness of her answer.

CHAPTER XII.

"WOO'D AND MARRIED AND A'."

THERE is no sight prettier than a village wedding—I mean, a wedding in a village.

We all know the conventional St. George's, Hanover Square, sort of wedding; the great empty church filled with gaping spectators, three-fourths of them strangers to the bride and bridegroom; the usual crowd collected outside; the fortunate policeman whose beat it is; the nursemaids; the barefooted Arabs, the London *gamin* of the streets; there is the everlasting yellow chariot, the grey horses, the postilions in their red satin waistcoats; the favours; the fuss; the pretty smiling bridesmaids; the never-to-be-done-with pomp and pageantry of a nineteenth-century English wedding.

Inside the crowd is larger; the sun streams through the great painted windows on a motley of shifting colours; the sacred places are invested by well-dressed people, who on another day in the week would have remained penned up in their luxurious pews, but who now crowd the chancel. There are hand-shakings and introductions, whispered jests, fluttering fans. By-

and-bye the ceremony goes on—that most awful ceremony except one—speaking of responsibilities, of duties, of vows, that are life-long. Who among them listens? The mother and sisters shed a few tears, perhaps; the bridesmaids are more ready to titter—most of them have been brought up in devout habits, yet few kneel; presently the benediction is spoken; the man and wife go out together hand-in-hand, the bride's head a little bowed perhaps; the baskets of favours go round; the horses paw the ground; the carriages roll away one by one; the bystanders criticise the dresses, the bride's looks, the red hair of the bridegroom; the younger ones huzza a little. It is all over; it has been a goodly show. But who is there among all those spectators who prayed that He who blessed the marriage in Cana of Galilee may strengthen the hands of the pair who are going out to fight the battle of life together?

It is not that people are more devout in the country, but that the accessories are brighter. In lieu of London streets we have green fields and deep hanging lanes. The bells peal out or tinkle merrily from the little church; the young people of the village assemble in the porch, or line the churchyard; the babies are tumbling over the graves, and come up with their hands full of daisies. One or two old men, in their white smocks, lean on the low lichen-covered wall. There comes the modest procession: there is the bride, God bless her! Off go the poor old hats; the school-children curtsy; the straw

bonnets are full of homely flowers. By-and-bye, when the young wife reappears on her husband's arm, she will tread lightly on gillyflowers and pinks, and old-fashioned stocks—how sweet the air is with them! The organ is playing out the "Wedding March;" the bridesmaids come down in their crisp muslins; there are fresh curtsies; the babies coo and clap their dimpled hands; Giles Stodge's bleared eyes clear a little. Blue skies, green fields, a little crispness and freshness, a few flowers, a few kindly prayers and words, greater loving-kindness, and gratitude for a great happiness—these are all that are needed for wedding garments.

It was this sort of wedding that Guy and Honor had planned for themselves. Birstwith was a very primitive place; the lord of the manor had rights that were almost feudal; the Squire's harvest must be carried, let who will suffer; in the sheep-shearing seasons the farmers must wait till the Chichester sheep were denuded of their wool and crowded the home-fields with shining white bodies.

Between the Great House and the village there was a hearty reciprocity of interest and good-will. The masters of Ingleside came of a wealthy stock, but the love of home was deeply bred in them. Guy Chichester was the only rover; his father and his father's father had dwelt as patriarchs among patriarchs—fattening up calves, breeding colts, very great in the hunting-fields, stern as to the preservation of game, and merciful in their capacity of magistrates to all offenders

except poachers. Guy, in spite of his roving propensities, was a greater favourite than his father had been. Mr. Fortescue complained that the kitchens of Ingleside were turning his people into paupers: in the winter, bales of flannel and hundreds of quarts of soup found their way into the labourers' cottages.

Guy was for ever bringing in people—tramps and worn-out gleaners, hungry mothers and children—to enjoy a plentiful meal. Sometimes, after church on Sunday, there would be a row of the old people of the village—aged men and women from the parish union—sitting round one of the clean-scoured tables in the servants' hall, waiting for the invariable beef and plum pudding.

That the Squire should do something handsome on his wedding-day was as fully expected as that the bells should ring on Sunday. Long beforehand it was settled no work should be done in the village. The people were all dressed in their best and standing at their doors, as though sowing and ploughing and delving were unheard-of things. A few of the able-bodied men were away on necessary work, but even they would be back in time for the feast. In the long green field beside the church the white tents were up, and the red and blue flags were straining and flapping in the breeze. There was to be roast beef and plum pudding for young and old, a cask of cider had been provided, and some of the rare Yorkshire ale too; and the miller was to take the chair; and Guy meant to leave his guests and come down for a parting

cheer, before the travelling carriage took him and Honor away.

But in spite of the festivity of the village, the cloudless day, and the bridegroom's radiant face, Beatrix Delaire declared the whole wedding a very poor affair, and decidedly rustic.

Guy had plentifully provided for his poorer neighbours, but he had bidden very few of his richer ones to the wedding. Both he and Honor were painfully unconventional in their notions, as Beatrix phrased it. Neither of them wished to mar the sacredness of the day with admitting all kind of nondescript outsiders. Beatrix and her husband, Mrs. Tressilian and Edith, and the Fortescues and the Trevors, were the only guests. William Elliott married them—drawn away again reluctantly from St. Luke's by their urgent entreaties; Cousin Latimer assisted, but it was Will who pronounced the nuptial blessing, who placed Honor's hand within her husband's, whose cordial congratulations were the first that greeted the newly-wedded pair.

One thing grievously offended Mrs. Delaire, Honor had no bridesmaids; she walked up the aisle leaning on her brother's arm, and, as she came into sight, Guy left his place to meet her; and when they reached the altar, the two knelt down together, hand-in-hand, till the officiating priest was ready. There was not one among the guests who did not long remember that day, and the grave, beautiful face of the bride, as her clear voice repeated the solemn words, "till death us do part." Was it fancy, or did she turn pale

and tremble slightly? Dym did not notice it, for suddenly the sun broke dazzling from behind a cloud, and streamed down over the chancel pavement, tinging Honor's dress with crimson and violet; and looking up, she saw Will's head surrounded by its golden glory, and his face "was as the face of an angel."

What a dream and unreality that day was to Dym! The great glittering table, where, through a vista of *épergnes* and pyramids of flowers, she caught sight of Honor's queenly head, and Mr. Chichester's bearded face beside it. She held fast by Will's side, with a very humble child's face, all that day; she was feeling dimly after some great beautiful truth that she only half understood. How improbable—how altogether impossible—it seemed that any one should love her as Guy loved Honor! She was peeping—poor little soul!—into some wonderful woman's paradise, full of all manner of golden fruit and dazzling things. Would she ever be permitted to enter? Were there only a few privileged to know such happiness? Were there others outside, lonely, and forgotten as she was?

Poor ignorant little Dym, crying out for the moon, conscious of strange wants, wishing to be something to somebody, and all the while Humphrey was longing to take her to his great honest heart, and show her all its treasures—heavy gold that did not glitter, priceless jewels in rugged settings, stainless honour and integrity, and a wealth of love that would give of its substance, asking for little in return!

Dym shrank away from Humphrey, and placed herself under Will's wing—Will who took such care of her, though he ate nothing himself—Will whose manly speech, when they pledged him afterwards, touched every heart, and even drew tears from the bride's happy eyes. Honor did not wait for any more speeches after that; when Will had finished, she took her mother-in-law's hand and led her from the room. Guy and she were with her for a long time, When the others thought Honor was changing her dress, Dym, coming in to hurry them, found her, still kneeling in her bride's dress, with her hand clasped in Mrs. Chichester's, and Guy standing beside them.

"Do not be long, my wife," whispered Guy, leading Honor to the door. But there was no need to hasten her; in a marvellously short time she returned, before Guy had got back from the field that was still ringing with the cheers.

He came in, looking pleased and excited.

"Good-bye, Dym," were Honor's parting words as she pressed the girl fervently to her. "This day has linked us together more than ever. One day, dear, may you be as happy as I am!"

"I leave you a precious legacy, Miss Elliott," said Mr. Chichester as he came up to shake hands with her. "Take care of my mother, and God bless you! You know I shall never forget my little friend."

But it was at Mrs. Chichester's side that Honor tarried longest.

"Good-bye, mother; you are mine as well as Guy's now. Do not be lonely without us;" and people marvelled at the long silent embrace that followed.

The guests and servants were all on the terrace, and some of the younger ones threw garlands into the carriage as it rolled off. Will stooped down and picked up one that lay at his feet—it was a green rowan spray.

Will took the night mail up to London that same evening; not even Dym's entreaties could induce him to defer his departure to the next day.

"My dear child, I must go," he returned quite gently; but when Will spoke in that tone she knew he meant to keep his word. Dym went back to the great brilliant drawing-room where Beatrix was playing on the grand piano, and Mrs. Chichester, with tired face and unsteady lips, was listening to her sister's dreary platitudes. Mrs. Fortescue, in an elegant pose, was talking London gossip with Colonel Delaire, and her husband was playing spillikins with Edith.

How empty the room seemed; what vacuum what dreariness! How she missed the tall restless figure that always perambulated it at this time in the evening, or harangued them from the rug! How mercilessly he used to quiz her! what drollery, what covert sarcasms spoke in every tone of his voice! He could make them laugh, but he could be eloquent too.

There were times when Mrs. Chichester and she would hush their very breath as they

listened to him. What grand thoughts, what a vast comprehensive grasp of mind he had! sometimes his voice would change and tremble with the very greatness of his subject; then all at once he would be silent; Dym wandering in the corridors afterwards would hear weird music, suffering, passionate, drawn into strange chords and thrills of sound, reverberating through the room till Kelpie howled a protest, and came up fawning to his master, to coax him to a midnight ramble through the sleeping village.

But Kelpie had gone with his master, and it would be long before Ingleside would welcome their return. We all know the vacuum after a great excitement; the lights have gone out at the feast, our friends have departed; far away they may be thinking of us, but we are sitting lonely and sad without them; this morning they were with us, we pressed their hands and bade God speed them, and now they are gone.

Life is full of these wearinesses, these disgusts; when our days lose their flavour, and are nothing but minutes and hours; with some of us it is like Mariana in her moated grange—

> Old faces glimmered through the doors,
> Old footsteps trod the upper floors,
> Old voices called her from without.

The very silence has a voice within it; we hear our friends though not a word is spoken.

Humphrey looked across the room very longingly for some time before he ventured to approach the corner where Dym had ensconced herself.

It was by the open window, for the evening was mild. Dym had a book before her, but her eyes were looking out on the moonlighted terraces; her face had a sorrowful, wistful expression. Humphrey thought evidently his presence disturbed her, for a gleam of impatience crossed her face.

"Are you going, Mr. Nethecote?"

"Not just yet," he replied, sitting down beside her. Humphrey was short-sighted, and his chair got entangled with the violet silk. Dym reproved him with a little sharpness as she freed herself.

"I am afraid I am very clumsy," said poor Humphrey apologetically. It was almost painful to see how humble he would be with this girl; the more capricious and uncertain she was the gentler he would be with her. Humphrey was always being punished for her unsatisfactory moods, though the truth must be owned he often stumbled upon them with a singular want of tact. Humphrey would not see when he was not wanted; he would come up with his honest face and jest just at the wrong moment. At times Dym would behave herself very sweetly to him; with all her humours she had an odd confidence and faith in this simple kindly friend of hers. For days together Humphrey would nourish the hope that this suit was not looked upon unfavourably. The mistake lay in Dym's perfect unconsciousness and his ignorance of it; it had never entered her head to recognise Humphrey as a lover, and Humphrey had not as yet ventured to address her.

As he sat down beside her, hardly repulsed by her ungraciousness, though a little rueful over it, a faint suspicion came into his mind that he was too rough and uncouth to be the husband of such a dainty little creature. In spite of her sullenness Dym looked wonderfully well to-night; the rich silk and lace ruffles and the dead gold locket became her marvellously, as she sat there with her smooth dark hair tucked behind her ears, and the troubled light shining in her eyes. She looked certainly very graceful and attractive, and other men besides Humphrey Nethecote might have felt inclined to lose their hearts to her.

"I suppose I shall have to go now," continued Humphrey. "I am putting off the evil moment as long as I can, for though I wouldn't wish it, it is hard to go home and miss the Duchess."

Dym felt a little visiting of remorse. Here she was luxuriating in her sad thoughts, while all this time Humphrey was bravely striving after cheerfulness and hiding deep down in his heart that he sorely felt the loss of his only sister, the sweet woman-face that had made the brightness of his hearth for so many years.

There is something especially sad when a middle-aged brother or sister loses the companion of life. Now and then one hears of such cases, but it is death oftener than marriage that robs them of their domestic treasure. Humphrey was years enough older than Honor to feel a sort of fatherly love for her; he had been a boy when she was an infant in her cradle, and a youth when she was a little maiden tottering after him, and call-

ing out to Humphie to lift her over the stepping-stone. But Honor had been his wise and cheerful companion for many years now. Without weakness, Humphrey had learned to trust her judgment and respect her decision. "Ask the Duchess; she knows more about it than I," was a frequent speech on his lips. I believe if Honor had understood such things he would have farmed his lands on her method in preference to his own. It was pleasant to see the mutual love and reverence of the brother and sister, and yet he had given her up to his friend without a selfish sigh, and was bravely setting himself to do without her.

Perhaps Humphrey's quiet manly bearing won her respect at last; perhaps, as I said before, Dym felt some visitings of remorse, for her manner changed and softened.

"It must be very dull for you. I am afraid you will miss her dreadfully," she said, trying to infuse a little interest into her tone.

Humphrey brightened up.

"These things come a little hard at first," he returned sturdily. "Once I should have thought of doing without my right hand sooner that I'd have done without the Duchess. You see, a man grows to lean upon his womankind; with me it was 'Duchess do this and Duchess do that' all day long."

"Poor Mr. Nethecote!" it was all Dym said, but her eyes beamed on him full of kindliness; something seemed to tug at Humphrey's heart-strings and to take away his breath for a moment;

her voice was sweet to him, and so was her pity; but if he could only make her understand that she could comfort him.

"It is not so bad as it might be," he broke out in a gruff unsteady voice. "I shall not be quite lonely when I smoke my pipe in the evening; I shall have heaps of queer thoughts to keep me company. I wonder what you would say if you knew some of them."

Dym shook her head. She was not quite sure that she cared to know many of Humphrey's thoughts. She yawned a little as Humphrey prosed on in his slow way; he noticed it at last.

"I must go away. I see I am tiring you," he said very sadly. Dym dropped him a little curtsy and then gave him her hand; her eyes blinked at him, looking very drowsy and pretty. "Good-bye, dear," he said, patting the little hand kindly. Dym looked after him. As the honest fellow went out stumbling over the ottomans and footstools, a sudden colour came into her cheeks. Why had he called her dear? had he forgotten? was he so very unhappy? "Poor Humphrey, we must cheer him up," she thought as she went up to her room, and oddly enough she fell asleep still thinking of him.

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